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THE CONTEMPORARY DRAMA OF ITALY

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THE CONTEMPORARY DRAMA SERIES

Edited by Richard Burton

THE CONTEMPORARY DRAMA OF ITALY

BY

LANDER MacCLINTOCK, Ph.D.

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PREFACE

THE Contemporary Drama of Italy has hitherto been known to the English-speaking public through the work of comparatively few dramatists. This history hopes to show these writers in their chronological and literary background and to introduce other dramatists who deserve to be known. If it succeeds in planting or stimulating interest in the Italian Drama, if it gives an impulse, however slight, to that movement for mutual understanding which is gaining headway in Italy and America, then it shall have more than fulfilled its function.

An apology is necessary for the uncertainties in the dating of premières and first printing of plays. There is no single source for such data and authorities differ so that confusion prevails. For completeness and certainty a prolonged investigation on the ground would be necessary, a search through journals and records not accessible on this side of the Atlantic. This would be a labor of years and really lies outside the field of the present study. Wherever possible the dates have been verified, but unfortunately the material in American libraries is far from complete. The author must bear the blame, however, for any flagrant mistakes.

My thanks are due above all to my mother, Mrs. Porter Lander MacClintock of the University of Chicago, who has rendered me invaluable service in the prepara-

tion of the manuscript. Her helpful suggestion and friendly criticism have been a constant source of inspiration. My thanks are due also to Mr. Barrett Harper Clark for suggestions and for the use of his valuable dramatic library, and to the Editors of the *North American Review* for permission to reprint the chapter on Roberto Bracco.

LANDER MACCLINTOCK.

SWARTHMORE, June 28, 1919.

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THE CONTEMPORARY DRAMA OF ITALY

CHAPTER I

The Foundations

The contemporary drama of Italy, like every other living literary manifestation, mirrors the interests and the thinking of the society that produces and enjoys it. With a knowledge of the political, social, religious, and artistic currents that have swayed the nation for the last hundred years, one could almost prognosticate the drama. In order, however, to make his prognostication safe, he would have to take into account the more narrowly literary heritage that accrued to the new movement.

It must be considered as taking its rise in the decline of the romantic movement which in Italy as elsewhere, having flourished in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, lingered on through the second quarter and died out in the third.

If one may boldly indicate at the very outset what seems to be the fundamental distinction between the disappearing mode and the newly appearing one, he may say that it is to be found in a certain shift of emphasis,

a transference of purpose. The aim and ideal of the Romanticist was effectiveness, that of the modern was fidelity to life and fact; the Romanticist exalted beauty, the modern proclaimed truth; the Romanticist staked all on a direct, simple, and often violent appeal to the emotions; the modern, a better psychologist, attempted to reach the emotions through the intellect, — he expects his reader or spectator to be convinced as well as moved. Indeed, typically he expects him to be moved because he is convinced.

Putting it broadly, then, one may say that the two things that characterize the modern movement in literature are first, reality, fidelity to life, truth to fact, — whatever the phrase one chooses to name this single but many-sided aspect; and second, the intellectualization of its themes. Of these two the first characteristic is peculiarly acceptable to the Italian genius. Realism expresses something that is of the very fibre of the Italian nature. Romanticism was to begin with an importation from without, — from England, Germany, France; it had no native root in Italy. It remained exotic and alien and never really "ran wild."

The mind of the Italian is, in spite of that vivacity of manner that seems to indicate emotionality, concerned primarily with the intellectual or more narrowly with the rational, or perhaps still more narrowly with the logical aspect of things. As a people they are typically realistic, and as is the case with the inwardly intellectual though outwardly emotional French, these mental characteristics all hinge upon their prepossession with actuality. The Italian acts upon no uncriticised and unguided instincts. From certain points of view he is the most unprejudiced

man in Europe, in that he proceeds upon no assumptions. To him there is no mystery he may not probe, no sanctities he may not investigate; he has no reticences, he cherishes no idols. To him the romantic doctrine of "*tant pis pour les faits*" has no validity, since he brings everything, even things that have immemorially lurked in the shadow of illusion, to the test of fact and examines it in the glare of actuality. He is dominated not by ideals but by ideas. He is interested in life and contented with it as it is. There is much that is admirable and reassuring in the fearless intellectual integrity of the modern Italian. For so many centuries the national mind seemed to be cramped in a religious strait-jacket, confronted wherever it might turn by an ecclesiastical *cul-de-sac*, that its emergence into the independence of an extra-doctrinal world partook of the nature of a triumph. And modern Italians have achieved an independence undreamed of in an Anglo-Saxon community in which thinking and conduct are so vigorously regulated by public opinion that the very power to think and to will has become a sacrifice to this intangible but powerful monster. We may see the Italian guided by his untrammeled reason through a region where an Englishman follows the dictates of good form, or responds to a purely emotional reaction.

It throws much light upon Italian art in all its forms to remember that typically and essentially the Italian learns from the outer world and trusts little to inward illumination. Of course to the Italian realist, as to thoughtful realists anywhere, nature and life are taking on constantly new meanings before his eyes, and must be looked at under constantly changing aspects. But he is not primarily if at all concerned with interpretation; he is, when he is

typical, portraying external things in the light of intelligent observation, not presenting inner things under the glow of emotion. He is realistic, not romantic; his work as a literary man is epic or dramatic rather than lyric. Even in the Shakespearean imitations of Manzoni, in the violent emotionalism of Cossa's lurid plays, in the determined medievalism of Marenco — in these, the great romanticists of Italy's modern theatre, one may easily detect these two proofs of their native misgivings: a striving after some form or some degree of verisimilitude to life and fact, and a pervading, if faint, tinge of ironic disbelief in the thing they are doing. Manzoni, Cossa and Marenco were all the while conscious of the romanticism of their work; it and its atmosphere were of the nature of a *tour-de-force,* never the result of a spontaneous impulse.

Since the advent of the historical method of criticism, perhaps the most precious product of the great, critical eighteenth century, and the work of Herder, its most notable exponent, it has become forever impossible to discuss a literary movement as an isolated phenomenon; the principle that no literary age is without influence upon its successor, which in turn bequeaths a legacy to its own descendant, has become a fixed law in critical technic. Literary history cannot be regarded as a series of juxtaposed but separate epochs like a string of beads, but must be seen rather as a series of links forming a living chain, mostly closely and intricately conjoined. In Italy, as we may expect, the contemporary drama is related to its predecessor in this complex way. It is partly a reaction against the excesses and extravagances of the older period as all new movements are. Yet it was obliged to accept from its predecessor some ideas

and principles that are still efficacious, such as, for instance, truth to local color, the avoidance of anachronisms, "preservation of the tone", particularization rather than generalization of experience and of expression, the interest and value of lowly people and common emotion; these are to-day a much-prized part of the baggage of every practical dramatist and every dramatic theorist.

More potent than any of these, however, is the principle evolved by the pre-moderns that the drama may legitimately concern itself with social problems, with economic conditions and laws, with matters of moral and political justice. One may say that this concern with big social and ethical questions has been the dominating, when it has not been the actuating principle of modern drama in England, in France, in Scandinavia, in Germany, coming to its completest expression in Ibsen, in George Bernard Shaw, in Eugène Brieux, in Hauptmann. In Italy, too, this type of play has found a place, — though by no means so large or so early a place as in the other countries. This fact has some interesting explanations.

It could not be otherwise than that the French Revolution, putting into active practice the ideas of social justice worked out during the eighteenth century, should have echoes and reverberations in Italy. It brought home to this nation also the idea of the individual's responsibilities and privileges; and we see its drama becoming steadily though quietly less and less a mere literary and theatrical performance, and more and more a vehicle of ideas, a laboratory of theories, a school of conduct.

But up to the middle of the nineteenth century this revolutionary seed could not openly and freely come to

flower and fruit. Italy was under the heel of the Austrian invader and the censorship was strict. But with the casting out of the enemy the gates were opened, the chains were struck off, and the social drama, the characteristically modern drama, was free to develop as its genius dictated.

In Italy there is no definite date, such as may be assigned in France, at which the dying romantic gave place to the rising realistic drama. The dramatists of the quarter-century, 1835–1860, were transition writers dividing their allegiance between the old and the new, and in their work there is the well-known transfusion of the two manners and matters. Cossa combined the romantic and realistic tendencies to the confusion of both; Leopoldo Marenco was frankly romantic, but with strikingly modern elements in his work; Paolo Giacometti's *Civil Death* has been called the first modern Italian drama — and it is the first to discuss a vital, practical social problem — prison reform; Giuseppe Giacosa begins as an idyllic, romantic, idealistic writer of delicate trifles such as *A Game of Chess*, but in his later plays such as *Sad Loves* (*Tristi Amori*) attains well-nigh the austere and naked verity of Ibsen.

Again, in Italy no single man or small group of men can be named as inaugurating the new movement. In France, of course, it is possible to draw a definite line, and say that with the advent of Émile Augier, Dumas *fils* and pre-eminently, Henri Becque, the old order in drama came to an end, and the new began. It is very different in Italy. On the one hand, as one might expect in this intellectual and objective-minded people, there were currents of realism running through their drama from the early years of the nineteenth century when the other literary peoples of Europe were entirely absorbed in romanticism; on

the other hand, the romantic tragedy in verse has flourished in Italy as in no other country, and it still has there more blood in it than any other form of play. To the average Italian even to-day the representative dramatists of his country are not the prose writers of social plays — not Bracco, not Marco Praga, not Butti, but poets, — Gabriele D'Annunzio, Sem Benelli.

But while it is true that romantic currents still flow more or less beneath the surface in a realistic age, just as realist currents flowed more or less obscurely through the romantic period, we may still say quite definitely that it is realism with its precocious child naturalism that has now gained the ascendancy in literature and in the theatre.

Is it fair to say that the Italians are a histrionic rather than a dramatic people? In another connection mention has been made of their vivacity of manner as implying a degree of emotionality which they really do not possess. This same vivacity of manner — the incessant and eloquent play of expression and flash of gesture — has sometimes won for them the epithet "dramatic", when as a matter of fact it indicates no capacity for those matters that constitute the real life of the drama. It may be, and is, a desirable part of the equipment of the actor; it does not argue the gifts of the dramatist.

If we look at their literary history we shall find before the nineteenth century but two dramatists to be mentioned along with Corneille, Racine, Molière, Beaumarchais, and Voltaire — Alfieri and Goldoni. And there has never been in Italy as there was in England in the sixteenth century, and in France in the seventeenth, a great period of dramatic florescence. There is not a single name in Italy to place near the names of Shake-

speare, Marlowe, Jonson. One searches in vain up to the middle of the eighteenth century for one important name in drama, — and this statement is made in full cognizance of Guarini, whose *Pastor Fido*, by one of those strange accidents of literary history, had a European influence, of Metastasio, whose librettos are reckoned good plays by some critics, and of the many other writers of obscure plays.

It would seem obvious that a people who during a literary experience of five hundred years produced only two dramatists of only fairly high rank, cannot justly be called dramatically gifted.

It may seem more or less of a paradox to say that the common man of Italy — *il popolo* — has always had unusual histrionic talent and has been very fond of the theatre, finding in it an outlet for his feeling, a congenial vehicle of self-expression, and a perennial source of entertainment. The popular drama and the theatre of the populace reached its apogee in the *Commedia dell'Arte*, the improvised comedy, which was at the height of its popularity a hundred years ago, but which still survives and even flourishes in the playhouses of the humbler quarters of Florence, Bologna, Rome, and Naples.

This *Commedia dell'Arte* is the product of the histrionic gifts and tastes of the Italian people, rather than the outgrowth of a genius for drama. It is born of the love of a show, movement, dancing, of the love of farce and jokes and the familiar social "take-off" of one's friends and neighbors; it bears no trace of evolution and interplay of character, displays no attempt to create the thrill of an intense situation or the interest of an interwoven plot.

In Italy the *Commedia dell'Arte* is indigenous and comes

from the very soul of the people. It is their very own theatre where they see themselves and their friends on the stage as in real life, hear spoken the language they use in house and market, hear allusions to the very places, objects and people that they know best. How dear this comedy has been to them is witnessed by the fact that here, a unique instance, is genuine folk drama surviving to our own day in the midst of sophisticated intellectual communities.

The love of the spectator for the show is matched by the delight of the actors in presenting it. It is true that the Italians have by nature many gifts as actors, — vivid, expressive faces, mobile, eloquent bodies, musical, flexible voices, the capacity for working themselves up to climaxes of passion, a hereditary tradition of great and clever acting. One can scarcely set foot in Italy without realizing that he is among a nation of actors. It is when he studies their literary drama that he recognizes the chasm that may lie between histrionic ability and dramatic creativeness, that he realizes that the producing of drama and the interpretation of it may be quite different things.

Historically the divorce between folk or popular and art and literary drama remained complete until within the last fifty years. When the moderns with their conviction that literature should mirror life and fact approached the drama, they found in the *Commedia* a form of realism that they were obliged to respect. It is the union of the two impulses together with certain influences from outside that infused new blood into the well-nigh lifeless body of Italian drama.

There is one notable exception to the statement that art and popular drama have always been separate in

Italy, and that exception is the greatest of all Italian comedians if not the most distinguished of all Italian dramatists, — Carlo Goldoni.

A truly national and great drama results only when an artist takes hold of the drama of the people, uses its crude but genuine elements, elevates them into the sphere of art, and organizes them into things of beauty, style and distinction, turning folk drama into literature without depriving it of its native and popular qualities. "This is the true national drama," says Richard Garnett, "when the pulses of the poet and the people beat in full unison, and of which Greece, England, and Spain have given the world the most brilliant examples." Eschylus, Shakespeare and Calderon did not repudiate the folk plays; they transcended them, retaining their sincerity and their universality. This is what Goldoni did; indeed, his use of the popular play is much more evident than that, for he rewrote the *Commedia dell'Arte* into a true comedy of manners, and so successful was he in retaining the elements dear to the people that "Good Goldoni", "Papa Goldoni", is the best beloved and the most truly popular of Italian playwrights.

He began his dramatic career as a writer of those scenarios upon which the comedians were wont to embroider as the inspiration of the moment prompted them. The scenario was merely the outline or sketch of the plot, from which each actor in the *Commedia* gathered the trend of the story scene by scene — each actor being expected to improvise his share of the dialogue as he went. Goldoni soon learned that he could not depend upon the actors to put into his story any of the finer shades of meaning or any of the subtler touches of character that were in his

own image of it. So he proceeded to write out the words he wanted the actors to speak. The result was a drama, a real drama on the general outline of the *Commedia*. His plays have the indigenous quality, the racy flavor of their ancestry and at the same time possess that unity of purpose and sentiment which only an artist can give. Thus at a stroke Goldoni created Italian comedy; for as the English tradition in comedy comes down from Fielding, and the French from Molière, so the Italian proceeds direct from Goldoni. It is the tradition of humor not of satire; it is not so much the criticism of social mistakes as the display of pardonable social foibles; it is the comedy of character rather than of intrigue, of human experience rather than of constructed plot; it moves in a bourgeois world of middle-class emotions and situations, not in noble high-born circles, or in professional and academic groups; good-humored, a bit sentimental, sane and clear-headed, full of ineffable commonsense — this is the Goldonian, and therefore the truly Italian comedy, the comedy of Ferrari, of Gallina, of Giacosa, of Torelli and Testoni. With modification to suit the demands of modern psychology and the modern theatre, this seems likely to remain permanently the type and model of Italian comedy.

The place that Goldoni occupies in comedy must in tragedy be assigned to Alfieri. In tragedy he is the fountainhead of Italian inspiration. Since his overmastering talent gave its first impulse to verse tragedy this form of drama has been admired and enjoyed in Italy with a relish and a steadiness that it has not achieved in any other country. The writers of verse tragedies are legion and count in their ranks some of the foremost Italian

dramatists. At this day the public will crowd the theatres to see Benelli's *The Love of the Three Kings* or his *Supper of Jokes* or D'Annunzio's *Francesca da Rimini.* And though there are many and vital differences between these and the verse tragedies of Alfieri, the line is unbroken and the transformation has been gradual and organic.

In direct contrast to the comedy of Goldoni, the tragedy of Alfieri is not native to Italian soil, has no root in the life of the people. It is rather a purely conventional art drama on the classical model. It is of the line of Seneca and however it may have been modified as it has come down, now by the demands of a changing mode, now by the expectation of a new public, now by modifications and improvements in theatrical production, taking an occasional excursion into Romanticism, anon following a sidetrack into Shakespeareanism, its determining characteristics have remained unchanged, — rhetorical, intellectual, close-knit, the product of the brain rather than of the heart, the tragedy of character, rather than of fatal events. Matthew Arnold ascribes to Alfieri a certain "narrow elevation", a dignity and nobility of purpose and when his plays are at their best, a high moral purpose. (This last quality one may say without injustice has dropped out of the work of his most recent descendants.)

This then is the true Italian dramatic tradition: Goldoni in comedy, Alfieri in tragedy. The modern movement has in Italy as elsewhere added to these two varieties a third form of play — what the French call "*le drame*", the Italians "*dramma.*" This term has taken on a semi-technical value, and designates the play concerned with a

serious theme whose outcome is neither necessarily tragic nor comic. It is one species of the *drame* — the problem play — that is the characteristic product of the modern dramatic movement, its specific contribution to the world's store of art. Though it had been distinctly foreshadowed by Denis Diderot in France in the middle of the eighteenth century, the *drame* did not come into being as a definite form until well down in the nineteenth century with the advent of Alexander Dumas *fils* and Émile Augier. The former's *La Dame aux Camélias* and *La Femme de Claude*, and the latter's *Gendre de M. Poirier* and *Le Mariage d'Olympe* fixed the direction in which the new type was to develop, and under the inspiration of these two, Henrik Ibsen definitely and irrevocably settled the form.

In Italy too "the drama" came into being under the inspiration of the same two great Frenchmen whose influence spread south across the mountains as well as north to the shores of the fiords, and gave us in Italy, Ferrari, Giacosa, Bracco and Butti, all of whom received traceable influences from Dumas *fils*, and produced plays of contemporary setting dealing with social questions in a serious, though not necessarily tragic way, — the problem play.

This influence of French models upon Italian literature, notably upon drama, is one of the outstanding features of the modern movement. The borrowing from the French is incessant; all aspects of the movement had had a prompt echo in Italy; realism, naturalism, socialism, every French "-ism" breeds an Italian "-ism." Dumas *fils* can claim as disciples if not as imitators Giacosa, Bracco, Butti and a host of others; Henri Becque has almost as many; Émile Zola is the idol of the "Verists"

led by Giovanni Verga, who even planned a series of novels and dramas on the scheme of the "*Rougon-Marquart.*" Zola's "*Naturalisme au Théâtre*" supplies the arsenal of weapons with which the Italian theorists deal with their opponents. In the earlier age Victor Hugo had imposed upon the Italian Neo-Romanticists his doctrine of contrast, his teaching that the hero be the "*homme fatal*" pursued by his implacable destiny, the dictum that drama should lay down great principles through great deeds.

As a matter of fact half the plays now produced in Italy are either direct translations or close adaptations from the French, — the Gallic flavor being present in the most Italian of productions. This fact becomes very important for an understanding of the contemporary Italian theatre.

Before entering the more detailed investigation of the field proper to this study it seems necessary to give a glance at certain things in previous periods that vitally conditioned the new movement. First, in any study of the modern world one must take into account the revolutionary romantic period. In Italy, as everywhere else, this movement had its side of reaction against formalism, and of assertion of individuality, freedom and humanitarianism. But the Romantic movement did not assume in Italy, as it did in France, the aspect of a great convulsion of nature — a necessary and irresistible upheaval — and it did not establish the unshakable foundation that it built in France.

Madame de Staël, classifying literature as Northern and romantic on the one hand, and Southern and classical on the other, used Italy as furnishing the best example of

the classical. Naturally the very characteristics that make Italians *par excellence* the exponents of the classical strain disqualify them for attaining excellence in the romantic, the diametrically opposite strain, at variance with their traditions and unacceptable to their taste. Like Gothic architecture romanticism was an immigrant into Italy and never succeeded in becoming naturalized. Northern literary art began to exert a calculable influence upon the Italian drama only after the man who was destined to become Italy's greatest romantic writer had come under the spell of Shakespeare, of Walter Scott, and of Goethe.

This man was Alessandro Manzoni (1785–1873). He went when very young to Paris. When still a youth he became acquainted with Northern literature under the guidance of Madame de Staël, whose "*De la Littérature*" became an important formative influence in his education. Through her he became acquainted with the plays of Shakespeare, whom he passionately admired. The marvelous humanity, the gigantic power of the great Englishman took complete possession of Manzoni, and he resolved to write on this great romantic model, rather than in the conservative classical mold of his fellow countrymen. He wrote two important plays, *Il Conte di Carmagnola* (1819) and *Adelchi* (1822). In these Manzoni tries to secure an air of verisimilitude, to capture and present the atmosphere of the century in which each play is set, the former play being laid in the fifteenth century, the latter in the time of Charlemagne. He was concerned to represent the right historical milieu, with the custom and the passions proper to it, and so to do away with the psychological, political and social anachronisms that

deface the plays of Alfieri. It is amusing to notice, however, that the general atmosphere of the two plays whose actions lie presumptively seven hundred years apart is the same; the persons of the ninth century think, feel and talk precisely like those of the fifteenth. This, however, is a fault of execution rather than conception, for Manzoni was quite aware of the absurdity of those fundamental anachronisms. Manzoni was ever a dramatic play poet rather than a playwright; and his scenes of greatest power are those in which he has the best chance to write fine verses, in the choruses, for instance, with which the action is punctuated. The two lyrics, one in *Il Conte di Carmagnola*, the other in the *Adelchi*, are brilliant outpouring of a sincere and fervent patriotism and are glorious triumphs of lyric art. Some one has said "their wonderful plunging meter suggests a charge of horse."

Il Conte di Carmagnola when it first appeared in print was attacked by the *Quarterly Review* with its customary violence. It is interesting to know that no less a person than Goethe, the eagle king of poets, came to the defense of Manzoni, — one genius divining the other. The particular point of the *Quarterly's* attack was the Italian poet's violation of the established rules of tragedy, and Goethe's defense of his friend was the justification of his attempt to cast off the shackles of an outworn technic.

From a technical point of view Manzoni is of great importance in the history of the drama. In his day the Italian play was still saddled with the weight of the three unities, and other conventional working rules which Renaissance critics had "discovered" in Aristotle. Manzoni

saw clearly that the unities of time, place and action had served their purpose, whatever it was, and functioned in the drama of his day only as an incubus, an Old Man of the Sea, an insufferable tyrant. He seized upon the Shakespearean form as being free from fixed rules, a flowing and plastic medium adaptable to the subject and emotions to be presented. Manzoni's studies and imitations of Shakespeare let a flood of light in upon the dark and difficult places of Italian drama. In his "Letter on the Unities of Time and Place" he repudiated these unities; he redefined unity of action as unity of effect, as concentration of interest, which he pleaded for in place of the old narrowing of interest to a single and self-completing episode.

In his plays he puts his theory into practice, not confining himself to presenting the catastrophe in the life of his hero, but going back in the history of his experience so as to place the disaster in its proper and credible perspective.

But Manzoni, though his face was in the right direction, toward the freedom of the new form, kept many of the awkward and now atrophied devices of the classical stage — choruses, rhetorical speeches, acts of God, and the like.

To Manzoni a play was to be not merely the presentation of a particular happening or the experience of an ideal personage but rather the representation of an event, the epoch of this event, the characters of this epoch, displayed in their climate and country. In his own two plays he painted to the best of his ability pictures of the places and the times in which he set his action, with the sublime and the ludicrous, the beautiful and the ugly,

the graceful and the grotesque side by side or mixed *pêle-mêle* as they are in life. "Contrasts are the life of Art" is one of his epigrams, — a doctrine which Victor Hugo erected into a supreme literary law. Reading *Il Conte di Carmagnola* and the *Adelchi* one gets the impression of the complexity of life, the bustle and huge activity of people. Wanting the formal unities of the classical play, the scenes are unconnected, often apparently unrelated; the plays seem to be little more than a string of scenes as separable as the beads of a necklace, but the effect is the effect of a single whole. He achieves a unity truer and larger than that of any merely formal rules.

Manzoni's social and political opinions are also of importance for drama. He, too, was set on fire by the humanitarian teaching of the "Declaration of the Rights of Man", and was filled with the newer and broader patriotism which was its outcome. He had spent the formative years of his life in France: the terms of the motto of democracy — *Liberté, égalité, fraternité* — were written deep in his heart. He had come to know some of the most advanced of French thinkers, notably Fauriel, and under their influence had acquired those principles of equality and justice, that hatred of tyranny which finds eloquent words in the choruses of the *Adelchi*. The common man took on for him the aspect of a fellow human being, even the aspect of a brother. To these doctrines which he shared with all revolutionists he added his own particular fiery patriotism, the product of his hatred of the Austrians who were crushing all Northern Italy under the ruthless Teutonic heel. Manzoni had no desire for the prison to which the Austrian censor might so casually consign him. So he is careful in his

two plays and in his great novel *I Promessi Sposi* to veil his patriotic and democratic propaganda.

But now and again in his lyric pieces such as "*S'Ode al destro uno squillo de tromba*" in *Il Comte di Carmagnola*, the great Lombard poet reveals a flash of his love of Italy, of his passion for democracy, of his proud scorn of the foreign tyrant.

From the point of view of the theatre, Manzoni's plays, while they cannot be said to hold the stage, are not devoid of scenes effective and decidedly well managed. The *Adelchi* in particular is in some ways dramatic in a modern way, and the characters of the protagonist Adelchi and the heroine Ermengarda are drawn with great beauty and genuine power. In spite, however, of numerous scenes of true emotional value and in spite of a great deal of fine poetry Manzoni must in the history of drama be reckoned with and esteemed rather for his influence than for his absolute merit. He had the great good fortune and the adequate intelligence to herald the dawn of revolt against classical formalism and coldness, and to give early expression to the modern theories of the presentation of life on the stage, and to stand for the dramatic proclamation of social and political principles.

Though Manzoni is the outstanding dramatic writer of Italian Romanticism, there are others who should be mentioned as paving the way for modern literature. Most of them produced their major works in other forms of literature and wrote plays only as secondary or subsidiary. Such were Vincenzo Monti (1754–1828), who wrote in the tradition of Alfieri and whose *Caio Gracco*, *Coriolanus* and *Galeotto Manfredi* are some of the best and best known romantic dramas; Ugo Foscolo (1778–

1827), famous for his Byronian novel *Le ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis*, who wrote *Thyestes* (1796), *Ajax* (1811), *Ricciarda* (1820); Silvio Pellico, whose *Francesca da Rimini* was much admired by Byron and remains to this day one of the best dramatizations of the beautiful old story of passion and pathos; the Pindemonte brothers, Giovanni (1751–1812) and Ippolito (1753–1828), who were active and fruitful imitators of Shakespeare.

Next to Manzoni, however, the man who stands out above the group is Giovanni Battista Niccolini (1782–1861). He was prominent enough to give his name to a type of play. After his tragedy *Nabucco*, the patriotic drama came to be called the "*tragedia Niccoliana*." He enjoyed in his own day a most flattering success, which may have been due to the popular nature of his subject matter rather than to the dramatic or poetic merits of his plays; William Dean Howells, however, who has translated parts of Niccolini's best known play, *Arnaldo di Brescia*, calls this play a mighty tragedy.

Niccolini began his career with the production of pseudo-classic plays in the manner of Alfieri, *Polissena* (1810) and *Media* (1812). But coming under the influence of revolutionary reform ideas he wrote *Nabucco* (1816) idealizing the fall of Napoleon in a Babylonian tragedy. His next play, *Antonio Foscarini* (1821), an attack on the Metternichian administration in Italy, was forbidden by the police, because of its thinly veiled condemnation of the authorities. *Giovanni da Procida* (1830) contained an attack upon the Austrian oppressors, as did also *Ludovico Sforza* (1832) in which, under the thin pretense of picturing the miseries of Italy under a foreign conqueror in the fifteenth century, he again deals

a blow at the Teutonic invader of his own day. After *Rosmunda d'Inghilterra* (1838) came his masterpiece *Arnaldo di Brescia* (1843) and *Filippo Strozzi* (1847). These plays are meant rather to be read than staged — they are dramatic poems rather than actable plays. Indeed *Arnaldo di Brescia* is of the nature of an epic. The apotheosis of Arnaldo the fiery monk who defied his Pope is so bold that the play could not be presented at home for many many years after it had appeared in France — the government feared and condemned the political views it expressed. And certainly the Brescian monk, tribune of the people, rebel against the Emperor and the Pope, political and religious reformer, invited interpretation as the ideal patriot, champion of the principle of the sovereignty of the people, advocate of the destruction of the temporal power of the Pontiff. If in form it is not adapted to the theatre of any age, and has not stood the test of presentation, it is nevertheless a monument of lofty poetry.

Niccolini was full of zeal for the national aspirations of Italy as a poet following in the footsteps of Dante and Machiavelli, and the best of his work has for its purpose the awakening of his country to patriotic fervor. As an artist he was not committed to the tenets of any school. He was not bound by the conventions of formalism; and although by his training and taste he was a Classicist, he did not disdain the technic of the Romanticist when it increased the effectiveness of his appeal. The main thing to him was not how he made his appeal, but that he made it. He is a bit worldly-wise, a follower of the fashion, writing in the romantic mode because it was the mode and made the quickest appeal. His theatre is a

school of patriotism, an outpouring of emotion, lyric rather than dramatic, eloquent rather than analytic. These qualities he shared with Manzoni, and in him as in Manzoni we may detect some of the fundamental elements of modern drama, — his disregard for rules, his patriotic nationalism, his humanitarian principles, his defiance of all the established orders.

Luigi Tonelli in his *Evoluzione del Teatro contemporaneo in Italia* sums up the contribution of Romanticism to the theatre thus:

First as to form: a greater liberty, and the abolition of the unities; an almost rigid exclusion of Greek and Roman subjects, and the adoption of medieval ones; great freedom in verse form.

Second as to content: a humanitarian philosophy, an intensification and broadening of the spirit of patriotism, a gentle, suave feeling of sadness. To these we may add a greater attention to the realities of life (the beginnings of realism) and the discussion of contemporary social problems.

But in spite of these indications of the advent of new vigor, when we have excepted the two plays of Manzoni, and three or four of Niccolini, Italian Romanticism was entirely barren and ineffectual in the theatre. There is not one really great tragedy written in the first half of the nineteenth century, not one with a broad sweep of idea, or a deep reach of passion. The germs of much excellence were in them, but it remained in germ. It was not a drama-producing epoch. It was reserved for the men of the last half of the century — the Neo-Romanticists and the true moderns — to bear the fruit. Niccolini and Manzoni and their coevals but cleared the ground for Giacosa and Bracco.

Briefly so much for the literary ancestry and background of the movement we are to study; and now a still briefer word, a mere reminder of the social and political background: Politically the first half of the century was taken up in Italy by the absorbing and often desperate struggle for national independence and unity. The invaders had to be expelled, — first Napoleon and then the hated Austrians who occupied the whole valley of the Po. The nation was kept at white heat by the tyrannical excesses of the conquerors, and love of country came to be the sole enthusiasm of the eager little nation. Politics was paramount and matters artistic and literary were in abeyance. But with the Revolution and the unification of Italy under the house of Savoy and the consequent resolution of all insistent political difficulties there came a great revival of the arts, of drama together with the others.

From an intellectual point of view the Italian world was mainly occupied at this moment with the break-up of the old beliefs. The political struggle of the Roman Church to retain its temporal power was but one aspect of the many-sided conflict in which men's bitterest emotions took part. The refusal of the Pope to recognize the sovereignty of the King divided the nation into two camps.

From the social point of view an analogous struggle was going on between the classes. The strife between classes and masses and the gradual dawning of a social conscience, — these are the events which the drama reflects during the first half of the nineteenth century.

The declaration of Italian unity brought in a new era in literature as well as in politics. The drama of this New Italy period followed the lines of the older Romanticism;

there was the same emphasis on the evocation of bygone epochs, on effect for its own sake, on local color, — and each of these became the actuating principle of a type of play. The first called forth the historical drama, — medieval, classic, oriental; the second, melodrama; the third, developing into pure realism, was the main actuating motive of comedy. Nevertheless the effort to produce local color and to achieve reality of portraiture gives way to a practice which must always prove and in this case does actually prove the undoing of any body of art in which it takes root, — the striving for effectiveness at any cost.

The historical drama in its two forms had the most blood in it. It was Leopoldo Marenco (1831–1899) who set the fashion of the *dramma medievale* with his *Falconer of Pietro Ardena* (*Il falconiere di Pietr' Ardena*, (1871), a Sèvres china pastiche of the tenth century which had an immense popularity in the seventies. Felice Cavalotti (1842–1898) who also wrote these medieval dramas — notably *The Vagabonds* (*I Pezzenti*) — gives in the introduction to his *Agnese* the formula for them:

"The author may depart from history whenever he chooses, may invent on his own initiative situations, personages, episodes, just as the impressions of his mind and the contrasts of passions dictate; intent on representing on the stage more than historical facts, not an historical epoch, nor historical characters, but an '*episodio intimo*', one of these pitiful dramas of the heart which belong to all countries and all ages."

A critic need not be merely captious to say concerning this: "Very well! But why, then, this apparatus of history and local color?" One may add that it takes a

master and a scholar to fill a medieval setting with medieval psychology, and since the writers of the *drammi medievale* were neither, the historical setting is the merest paper and the *dramma medievale* as such mere sham.

Besides Cavalotti and Marenco the best known of the contemporaries of Cossa who wrote historical dramas were Angelo de Gubernatis (1840–1913), the oriental scholar, whose eastern dramas were drawn from the sacred books of Persia and India: *King Nala* (1868); a trilogy *The Death of Dararata* (1868), *Maja* (1869), and *Buddha* (1872). It is said that Wagner seriously considered these plays as a text for an operatic trilogy.

There was Giovanni Bovio (1841–1903), the famous philosopher who wrote plays on religious subjects, *Saint Paul, Christ at the Feast of Purim,* and a *Socrates.* There were Domenico Bolognese, with *Cleopatra; Caïna, Prometeo;* Gamboni, *Bianca della Pórta;* S. Morelli, *Harduin da Ivrea.*

It is Pietro Cossa that stands out as the commanding figure of this epoch of the Italian theatre: he was the first genuine man of the theatre of the nineteenth century, the first to say "The play's the thing." The plays of his predecessors stood the test of the library but turned heavy or flabby under the tests of the stage. With Cossa the case is in some sense reversed. Though *Nerone* (1871), *Plautus and his Century* (*Plauto e il suo secolo*) (1872), *Messalina* and *The Neapolitans of 1799* (*I Napolitani del 1799*) (1880) are not badly written they do not bear the scrutiny of the critic in his armchair; they are not logically constructed, not coherently organized; the verse is poor; he commits some of the worst excesses of the Neo-Romantics. It is the glare of the footlights that throws

the defects into the shadow and brings their compensating qualities into relief. One sees their swift and certain movement, their economy of means, their telling characterization, their powerful situations, and is prepared to say that while Cossa may not be a great poet, or a powerful thinker, he is preëminently a dramatic craftsman.

Nero is in many respects Cossa's best play and remains almost a great play. Masterly in stagecraft, and in its atmosphere a bitter satire, it falls short of greatness merely by Cossa's own failure to be great — for it gives the full measure of his artistic stature. He takes as the theme of the play and uses as his point of departure the famous speech of the dying Nero: "*Qualis artifex pereo.*" He avoids the Nero tradition of the inhuman monster of wickedness and says, "I show him not as Emperor but as artist." About this Nero and his court Cossa throws a brilliant atmosphere of reality, which is called by Benedetto Croce, in his masterly study of Cossa, the chief merit of the play. It is, he says, "*il verismo storico*" — historical naturalism — and Croce calls Cossa a precursor of the school that goes by the name of Verist, whose artistic creed is crystalized in Émile Zola's famous phrase "Art is life seen through a temperament." "His vision of history corresponded in many aspects to that view of life and society taken by the Verists" is the way Croce puts it, and he really had an unusual faculty for weaving together truth and invention, fact and simulation into a smooth and organic fabric that gives the illusion of life. In addition he had a gift for seizing and comprehending moods and types in history and transporting them to the modern stage. Add to this the fact that he was a born dramatist,

sure of touch and keen of sight for a genuine effect, and you have the list of his virtues.

Besides *Nero* one is tempted to single out for mention *Messalina*, called by some critics his best, and *Cleopatra*, in connection with which Costetti has not hesitated to mention the name of Shakespeare.

As poet Cossa seldom rose above the level of mediocrity, but his average verse is quite well suited to dramatic dialogue. Like Sem Benelli of more recent times, he meant his verse to be spoken and to be understood at one repetition, and its level mediocrity guaranteed this. It had, too, a quality badly needed at this time by the Italian drama, — a certain masculinity and ruggedness, most acceptable after the sugar-and-water dialogue of Marenco and Cavalotti.

It is an honor to assume as one's own the summary of so great a critic as Croce, whose judgment of Cossa will probably stand the test of time: "But the defects that we have seen in Pietro Cossa do not take from him the place he deserves in our literature. He pursued faithfully an artistic ideal which was determined by one aspect of our modern historical thought, and will be remembered as the author of one very uncommon work, — *Nerone*."

While the historical play in its various varieties was the most characteristic product of Italian Neo-Romanticism, the pastoral play was, fortunately, confined to the sixties and seventies. Marenco, just as he had invented the *Dramma medievale*, boasts that with his *Marcellina* (1860), *Giorgio Gandi* (1861) and *Celeste* (1866) he set a fashion and wrote the first of a long line of similar plays. Indeed they did start a type of drama as false to life as it was to art.

The Italian critic Ferrigni, whose *nom de plume* is Yorick, writes of this pastoral strain: "The stage became a nest of doves and pigeons, poetic language reduced itself to a continuous round of sonnets and madrigals and on the boards of the stage there came into being a whole anthill of dramas, pretty childish things, full of baby lovers." The theatre swarmed with oppressed maidens, virtuous brigands, philosophical shepherds and platitudinous old men, with storms and sheep and revelations from Heaven; there was in fact a recrudescence of the "Arcadian" spirit of the eighteenth century whose preciosity Goldoni had satirized. The same motives which in America inspired the New England farm drama found their expression in Italy in the pastoral plays of Marenco and his followers.

Paolo Giacometti (1816–1882), though the best of them, serves to represent a large group of writers who flourished at this time, whose cry was sensation, and whose effort was solely for effect, — the large group of melodramatists. He may be taken as speaking for them all when he says in the preface to his selected Works: "I have written rather for the populace than for the erudite and I had as a motto, 'Let us cultivate pure effect, let us multiply powerful effects.'" In his comedy *The Poet and the Dancing Girl* the poet makes the following declaration, under circumstances which lead us to regard it as Giacometti's own mind: "In the present critical circumstances of our theatre I said to myself, 'The public has had enough of man as he really is; now we have to move it with passions. Is the reign of beauty passed? Very well, then let us turn to the ugly, making in this way another dramatic world.' With this profession of faith

I began to read Victor Hugo, Ducange, Dumas; then I saw easily that by dint of creating seduced ladies, illegitimate children, deceived husbands . . . poisons, daggers, assassinations, stranglings, ghosts, butchers and gravediggers, one could become a dramatic author, — that is to say, with some new and original ideas scattered here and there." Satiric as this passage is it contains the kernel of Giacometti's work, — the dreary old effort at effect for effect's sake.

He is put in the front rank of melodramatic playwrights by his two plays *Maria Antonietta, Regina di Francia* and *La Morte Civile,* which Tonelli calls the most notable works of Italian *basso romanticismo.* The latter was particularly important. When it was first given in Paris, Émile Zola praised it for its *belle nudité;* by which he meant its stark truthfulness, its absence of flourish, its economy of means, its simplicity of action. Add to this the fact that the play, concerning itself with criminology and penal conditions, is one of the very first reform dramas in the modern sense, and it is easy to understand why Zola loved it. The action centers around the tragic figure of Corrado, the escaped convict, and nearly every great actor of the last half century has the part in his repertory. The rôle runs nearly the gamut of shivers and thrills, — Corrado is the greatest of Italian "bravos."

The other plays of Giacometti, and there are nearly a hundred, have all disappeared from the boards with the actors for whom they were written. He was not a great dramatist, but he was a good craftsman.

The critic Yorick in *La Morte d'una Musa* describes the melodrama thus: "Who does not remember the seductions, the violence, the ravishings, the private dungeons,

the stealing of documents, of plans, of pocketbooks; the escapes, the house-breakings, the false keys, and forgeries, of which the gentlemen of the lachrymose drama, the noble ladies of lachrymose comedy, all the knights and viscounts of melodrama, rendered themselves guilty before the jury of cultured listeners, only because they wore evening clothes and knew how to put on their gloves? And who can tell how unhappy and angelically spotless were the seamstresses in theatrical attics; how tender and gentle of heart the stonemasons and carpenters on the boards; what worthy consciences were possessed by the garbage men, and with what white stoles of innocence the chimney sweeps of the Val d'Aosta clad themselves, the coalmen of the Maremma, the miners of Leghorn and of Genoa, the modistes of Florence and Milan?" Is not all this full of reminders of Charles Dickens? And indeed the serious drama in Italy did at this time perform a function kindred to that performed by the English novelist, creating a social consciousness and awakening a social conscience.

It was Paolo Giacometti who produced what we are justified in calling the first comedy of manners of the modern school, a play which he assures us is an *étude sur le vif*, and a picture of manners or satire in dialogue rather than a comedy — *The Poet and the Dancing Girl* (*Il Poeta e la Ballerina*). Add to this the fact that, as he says, "I scourged vice without stint", and you have in this play the dominant working principles of contemporary drama, — realism and social criticism. It shows the ruin and degradation of a poet, a sensitive soul, and the complete prostitution of his talent under the influence of an unworthy woman, an actress. Giacometti's other comedies,

most of them in the Goldonian manner, never rise above mediocrity.

Felice Cavalotti wrote comedies also, his *The Song of Songs* and *Love Letters*, delightful and flimsy pieces, still being seen occasionally; but with Paolo Ferrari, Achille Torelli, Del Testa and Martini comedy really anticipates the modern movement. That realism which is latent in the historical plays and melodramas becomes vocal in the comedies.

The plays of Paolo Ferrari (1822–1889) fall inevitably into three groups: in the first historical plays, in the manner of Goldoni in which Ferrari did his most expert work, producing two masterpieces *Goldoni and his Sixteen New Comedies* (*Goldoni e le sue sedici commedie nuove*) (1852) and *Satire and Parini* (*La Satira e Parini* (1856)) both on subjects derived from Italian literary history; in the second group are plays of popular inspiration and of contemporary life, *A Sick Girl's Medicine* (*La medecina d'onna ragazza amaleda*) and *Uncle Venanzio's Will* (*Il Codicillo del Zio Venanzio*); in the third group, under the inspiration of Augier, Dumas *fils* and Pailleron, he goes frankly over to the *pièce à thèse* with *Prose* (*Prosa*) (1867), *The Duel* (*Duello*) (1868) in which he justifies the abominable custom, *Ridicule* (*Ridicolo*) (1872), and other plays of the same type. The key to Ferrari's work and at the same time a matter of significant import to the literary historian is this: from the beginning and all through his work he is concerned with morality; he is an inveterate teacher, an incurable critic. Croce says of him, "Ferrari had no other Muse; morality made him a dramatist, just as love or indignation have made dramatists of others." However, to the modern student of society and

ethics he takes a topsy-turvy view of morality. To him it is synonymous with social custom. Instead of appealing from convention in the name of the rights and privileges of the single soul he justifies and glorifies things as they are, condemning the rebel not the law. The typical Ferrari comedy consists of this: a theme more or less moral (from his point of view) is worked out with a technic which is a combination of the conventional Italian comedy with realistic details. He has undoubted power to create real types. His contribution to the theatre was that he domiciled the realistic movement in its first manifestation; he redigested French realism and made it Italian and he wrote half a dozen delightful dramas.

Other writers of comedy were numerous, but one may single out for special mention Vincenzo Martini, author of *The Crook* (*Il Cavaliere d'industria*) (1854), a piece of original observation of extraordinary vivacity; Luigi Suñer, a Cuban settled in Florence, who wrote *The Speculating Gentlemen* (*I Gentiluomini speculatori*) (1859); Riccardo Castelvecchio, who is remembered for his Goldonian plays *The Romantic Woman* (*La Donna romantica*) and *The Clever Chamber-Maid* (*La Cameriera astuta*); Tommaso Gherardi del Testa (1818–1880), who by his clear and elegant style and his facility at writing dialogue put new life into the banalities and threadbare situations of the old style comedies. *The Reign of Adelaide* (*Il regno di Adelaïde*), *Lucretia's System* (*Il sistema di Lucrezia*), *The New Life* (*La Vita Nuova*) and above all *The Second Wife* (*La Donna in Seconde Nozze*) all crowded the theatres of the seventies.

Achille Torelli's (1844–) finest play and greatest suc-

cess was his delightful comedy, *Husbands* (*I Mariti*) (1867). This drama two of his critics, Jean Dornis and L. Tonelli, call the first Italian play with modern technic, *i.e.* that approaches the *slice of life* theory of the naturalists, and Tonelli further judges it to be "one of the few real Italian dramatic masterpieces of the last century." Torelli's main emphasis was not on intrigue or situation, but on the display of various kinds of husbands, the rude and dissolute, the jealous, the noble and correct, the lovable and tactful. Torelli, though he wrote other plays, is remembered mainly for this one, which is frequently revived, always with astonished wonder at its perennial newness. It is a play genuinely modern in spirit and shows a distinct advance in technic over Cossa, Ferrari, Giacometti and their contemporaries.

The Italian drama at the middle of the eighties had arrived at a point where it was ripe for the modern movement. Romanticism contained the germs of it, Neo-Romanticism developed some of these germs and now it was ready to burst into blossom in the work of Giacosa, of Verga, of Capuana. The realism of Torelli and Ferrari gives place to the naturalism of the *Veristi*. The theatrical art, thanks to Manzoni and Niccolini, was untrammeled by the canons of a worn-out technic. It had passed through the stage of sentimental effectiveness in Marenco, in Cossa and Giacometti. The exploitation of the national past was no longer satisfying to an increasingly intelligent public, which more and more demanded discussion and solution of vital questions and urgent problems.

Literature from being subjective had become objective, from being lyric and epic had become analytical and

scientific. Romanticism and Neo-Romanticism, each containing the realism of the moderns, now gave place to the reproduction of life and the discussion of problems; the man who is the epitome of this development is Giuseppe Giacosa.

CHAPTER II

Giuseppe Giacosa

The work of Giuseppe Giacosa links together in a very interesting way the old and the new manners in Italian drama. He began as a writer of verse plays, of delicate trifles, of medieval *saynètes*, of adventure plays after the model of Marenco's; later he became a Verist writing on the formula of Henri Becque and finally a Realist in the manner of Émile Augier. Now while is it true that three changes of manner within an artistic lifetime are a bit confusing and create an atmosphere of fragmentariness, it is also true in Giacosa's case that it enhances his value and his interest to the literary historian; for he reflects to a nicety the varying dramatic taste of his time. His changes from *A Game of Chess* to *Surrender at Discretion*, that is to say from romanticism to realism, from realism to verism, as in *Sad Loves*, from verism to idealistic realism, as in *As the Leaves* and *The Stronger*, reflect with precision the evolution of public taste and the fluctuations in the world of art of the twenty-five years from 1880 to 1905. It might be well to point out just here that in connection with this aspect of Giacosa's history one could put a finger on his weakest spot; the very thing that insured his popularity was an indication of his fundamental lack of originality: he was a follower, never a pioneer. He interpreted his age, yes, but well after the epoch-

making cat had jumped. His mind was sensitive to the intangible prophecies of fashion, clear in observation, keen in analysis. Perhaps these qualities preclude genuine creativeness or philosophical speculation.

And if Giacosa was not a pioneer, if he blazed no trails, he broadened and smoothed the paths others had made into highroads along which humanity may travel with ease and delight. Others had been before him in the writing of medieval legends, but none of them has equaled in charm *A Game of Chess* or *The Red Count;* the Verist movement was well under way when *Sad Loves* appeared, yet that play is acknowledged as a type; the excitement about Verism had waned when he produced *As the Leaves*, which may be called the masterpiece of idealistic realism in Italy.

Giuseppe Giacosa was born October 21, 1847, at Colleretta-Parella in Piedmont. His father, an eminent advocate, destined him for the robe and sent him to the University for training. Giuseppe made a very poor lawyer, however, and his father, with unusual forbearance and foresight, gave him several months in which to find himself and decide on a career. During the year 1870–1871, the young Giuseppe devoted himself to writing and produced his first play, one act in verse entitled *A Game of Chess*. This little gem, first played in the private theatre of a noble amateur, had so striking a success that it was soon produced on the commercial stage and toured Italy with unfailing applause. This success determined Giacosa to make the theatre and literature his life work.

He describes in a letter "*Sulla giovane letteratura torinese*" his life in the Savoyan capital, in which he had

taken residence, — from his account an almost Parisian round of theatres, cafés and balls in the company of men of like tastes and aspirations. In particular he came to know at this time Edmondo de Amicis. Apparently only the restlessness of youth terminated his stay in Turin; he had become well known as a writer and lecturer when he moved to Milan.

Here his literary friendships were most distinguished and very important for him as a man of letters. One such friend was Arrigo Boïto, poet, musician and philosopher; another was Giovanni Pascoli, the poet.

Giacosa became director of the *Accademia dei filodrammatici;* like so many of his literary confrères he went more and more into journalism. In 1891 he visited the United States, coming in the train of Sarah Bernhardt, who was touring the States with his *Lady of Challant.* This journey he describes in a volume of essays, — *Impressioni d'America.*

As President of the Society of Authors and as one of the most popular lecturers in the Peninsula, he was very busy. Nor was he idle as a dramatist, as is witnessed by the fact that play after play was written between 1880–1895. In fact, the bulk of Giacosa's work, though not his best efforts, lies within this period.

In the later years of his life he collaborated on the famous journal, the *Corriere della Sera;* in 1901 he founded *La Lettera,* the literary supplement to the *Corriere* which he edited until his death, which occurred September 2, 1906. He had long suffered from a hopeless cardiac malady. He died a famous man and was mourned by all Italy.

Although Giacosa wrote in many forms — essays,

criticism, stories, books of travel, such as *I Castelli Valdostani e Canovesi,* showing fine appreciation and sound knowledge of archæology — still his real passion was for the stage, and to the drama he devoted his best efforts.

A discussion of Giacosa's dramatic work falls rather naturally into two parts, since this division represents a genuine cleavage in his performance. One part concerns itself with the lyrical plays and the historical plays, which are for the most part in verse; the other concerns itself with the comedies and the dramas of contemporary life.

A Game of Chess (*Una Partita a scacchi*) (1871) can scarcely be called a play in a technical sense but is rather what the French call a *saynète,* a delightful idyl in the manner of Longinus placed in a medieval setting. It is filled with the spirit of youth, the love of adventure, romantic love, expressed in gay and fluent verse. The simplicity and purity, the gentle melancholy, while still the tradition of the drama in verse, had nevertheless a something different about them that was like a breath of pure fresh air in the hectic overloaded atmosphere of the Marenco-Giacometti-Ferrari school of drama. Giacosa offered no manipulated historical truth, but frankly ventured forth into the realm of the imagination. The situations and characters are false to life but true to art. Because of its disingenuousness and youthful vitality the little piece took Italy by storm.

The plot of *A Game of Chess* Giacosa took bodily from the old French romance of *Huon de Bordeaux,* adapting it in details for modern consumption. It is a variation on an old theme, — the hero winning the heroine by the performance of a difficult task. The prologue is delightful,

setting the tone of the play, telling of the inception and conception of the scene. It is like an act from a play of Alfred de Musset in which the scene is *où l'on voudra.* Giacosa's verse is agile, swift, pliable, remarkably well suited to the ideas and feelings to be expressed.

An old Duke Réné and his lovely daughter, Iolande, live alone in a wild old castle. To visit them comes an old friend, bringing with him a handsome and brave young page, Fernando. The youth is courageous and proud but so boastful that at last Réné offers him a test. He is to play chess with Iolande, who has vanquished all opponents at the game. If he loses he is to forfeit his head, if he wins he is to wed the maiden. Fernando has meanwhile lost his heart to Iolande and eagerly accepts the offer. The play begins. Fernando loses and keeps losing. Iolande cries, "Of what are you dreaming, Page? You do not play and you do not speak." Fernando replies, "I am looking into your eyes that are so beautiful." Iolande is troubled. She too begins to feel the charm of her opponent's youth and beauty and finds herself in love with the young man. Now she tries to lose. She plays for him and at a critical moment of the game she takes his hand in hers and makes for him the move that checkmates her, winning for him the game and her hand. Her father cannot understand her losing, but she consoles him: "The victor is in the family, so there is no misalliance." *A Game of Chess* is, as may be gathered, merely a dainty trifle, but after the violent passions of the Neo-Romantics, it was welcomed with an appreciation and relief that amounted to a furor. It still remains the most popular of plays for amateurs in Italy.

The Triumph of Love (*Il Trionfo d'Amore, leggenda*

drammatica in due atti) (1875) is in the same tone and concerns itself with a very similar situation. Diana d'Alteno, having been witness of the marital unhappiness of her sisters, swears to remain unmarried. She cannot keep her vow, however, for she feels that she cannot let the great and noble family, which she represents, die out. She will accept as her husband the man who can vanquish her in a battle of wits. Suitors are numerous, all being vanquished, however, until a certain Ugo di Monsoprano appears. He loves Diana for her own sake. He wins in the contest, and she declares herself his: "You have won; I am your servant." But Ugo will have none of such a bargain or such a triumph. He will not take her unless she wants him, and he goes off leaving Diana to ponder over her conqueror. Little by little, hurt by his scorn of her, fascinated by the memory of his intelligence and his noble bearing, she falls in love with the man who jilted her. When an aged pilgrim appears at the castle gate, giving news of Ugo who, he says, is about to be married to a beautiful maiden, Diana's dismay and grief reveal her true emotions. Upon which the pilgrim, casting off his cowl and cassock, appears as the valiant young knight, Ugo di Monsoprano himself.

These two plays may be classed together as romantic idyls of the Middle Ages, delicate in fancy, dainty, owing little to reality. Nothing could be less lifelike than this papier-mâché and Sèvres china Middle Ages, false to nature and false to psychology. But Giacosa was making no attempt at anything so serious as truth. His ideal was that which he attributes to Goldoni in his verse, "Prolog for a monument to Goldoni."

"Thus from the multiform aspects of the idea there

grew up with renewed vigor an art which was alive, rich, varied as life itself. We were ingenuous, I admit, and it used to be said that the theatre was to amuse. Social problems were not solved there, nor were theatres changed into hospitals for diseases of the mind. It may seem exaggeration, but now and then there were good people on the stage."

This was his ideal in 1877, — to amuse; in later life it became just what he repudiates in this gently ironic passage, — social criticism.

Meanwhile, however, he felt that the field of the Middle Ages was not yet exhausted. He produced several historical plays in the next fifteen years, *The Red Count*, *The Brothers-in-Arms*, *The Lady of Challant*, all historical plays dealing with the Renaissance and the Middle Ages.

The first of these, *The Brothers-in-Arms* (*Il fratello d'armi*) (1877), is considered a very good play of the bombastic, pseudo-medieval type. A change in Giacosa's manner is immediately evident. He has left the idyl and is writing plays in the narrower sense, conflicts of character, tense situations, complicated intrigue. He has abandoned altogether his dreamy and enchanting tone for one of more violence, but no more reality. Valfredo di Arundello and Ugone di Soana, although hereditary enemies, had become brothers-in-arms after Valfredo had, by his gallantry, saved Ugone's life in the Crusades. Bona, the terrible sister of Ugone — licentious, lustful, unscrupulous, cruel — is smitten with Valfredo who has, however, given his heart to a captive maiden, Berta, who loves him in return. Unluckily Ugone also loves Berta, so that he is ready to listen to the promptings of his wicked sister, jealous of Berta. He casts the lovers into prison

and gives them into the power of Bona. All seems lost, but she is wooed to clemency by Fiorela, a minstrel, and she frees Berta. Meanwhile Ugone's enemies, Valfredo's family, have succeeded in entering the castle by a secret passage which leads, *mirabile dictu!* into the dungeon where Valfredo is confined. He, faithful rather to his vow to his brother-in-arms than to his family, renouncing the hope of freedom and love, shouts an alarm and perishes at the hands of his infuriated kinsmen. Ugone, repentant, realizing now too late the fidelity and purity of his sworn brother, cries to his followers to let the enemy enter without resistance, resolving that the castle itself shall be a tomb for Valfredo and its destruction expiate his own cruelty.

While he was occupied with these verse plays, Giacosa had written other plays which are collected in the volume *Commedie e scene*, and one melodrama in three acts, in verse. *The Husband in Love with His Wife* (*Il Marito amante della moglie*) (1877) as to plot and method might well be a Goldonian comedy, in its good-humored artificiality and its impossible plot of the husband who leaves his wife immediately after marriage, and who later returns disguised to woo her, and to test her fidelity. The character of Count Ottavio is well done, his progress in the presence of his wife from indifference to love, his torture at the thought of her possible infidelity — (for she will be unfaithful to him as husband if she accepts him as lover), — all this is cleverly done.

The Red Count (*Il Conte Rosso*) (1880) has created a great diversity of critical opinion in the Peninsula. Croce, for example, while he admits its importance in Giacosa's development, does not think much of it as a play; D'Oliva,

on the other hand, exalts it into a national tragedy; and the public has always enjoyed it. Croce says *The Red Count* marks Giacosa's transition from Romanticism to realism and it is easy to identify in it elements of both. He tries, as he had not done in any of the previous historical plays, to make not only the setting but the event itself conform to fact. Therefore he builds his play around a person who really existed, and who really performed the deeds accredited to him in the play. The plot does not center in a love interest but turns rather on the ambition of a prince to rule liberally and justly, to suppress his unruly barons, and to elevate the people. The play contains interesting and striking pictures of Piedmontese life in the sixteenth century, apparently studied with care; the speech and thought correspond to the atmosphere and have a consistent tone of actuality; there are none of the dreamy and idly sentimental youths and maidens, and the lovelorn poets of the earlier plays.

It must be conceded, then, that Croce's point is well taken, that this play is the turning-point in Giacosa's career as a dramatist; not that this is the first play in which may be found pictures of life in its actuality, nor the last in which fantastic and unreal elements appear. But it is the play in which it becomes evident that Giacosa is consciously and conscientiously trying to square his material by the measures and standards of fact.

One more historical drama remains to be examined, — *The Lady of Challant* [originally written in French as *La Dame de Challant* (1890), rewritten in Italian as *La Contessa di Challant* (1898)]. It is not, from any point of view, one of Giacosa's happiest ventures. He wrote it for Sarah Bernhardt, who brought it to America in 1891 in

a repertory that included Sardou in his melodramas *La Tosca, Théodora,* and *Fédora.* The juxtaposition of these plays forced a comparison unfair to Giacosa or to any dramatist of his caliber, or with his ideals.

The plot of *The Lady of Challant* is taken bodily from the chronicles of Grumello and from a novel of the sixteenth century story-teller, Bandello. The play is powerful and well constructed; Giacosa abuses, to be sure, the well-worn tricks of the stage that every practical playwright knows. Bianca as the fallen woman redeemed by love, Don Pedro, the chivalrous dupe and idealist, are *vieux jeux,* but in the hands of Sarah Bernhardt the play was galvanized into an astounding vitality, and just missed by a hair's-breadth being a convincing bit of art.

These historical plays are not the only products of the years from 1880–1889. During this same period Giacosa wrote both verse tragedies and prose plays of contemporary life. It need hardly be pointed out that in this latter type Giacosa found his congenial and distinctive vehicle; here he felt at home; here he produced his best work, and knew that it was his best. He wrote in 1905, "Whatever is said, the poetry of *Sad Loves* shows in the clearest way my dramatic temperament, and the works written by me immediately after *A Game of Chess,* all more or less realistic, are there to show it."

The first half of this statement is incontrovertible; the second half is dubious and elusive. On close examination, it would seem that in his "more or less" Giacosa gives away his case. To say, for example, that *The Husband in Love with his Wife,* one of the "plays written by me immediately after *A Game of Chess*", is more or less realistic is to say nothing, for it is so much less than more, as its

very theme will show, that it can only be qualified as romantic. To be sure *The Red Count* is less wildly romantic than the *Brothers-in-Arms*, but how far it is from the reality of the realism of *Sad Loves!* It is interesting, however, to notice that even while we feel the vagueness of Giacosa's claim for his earlier plays, we also feel that it is his conviction of the soundness of his later principles that colors his vision of the early plays, — he sees them as he would like them to have been. Undoubtedly the comedies and the dramas of the eighties are consciously shaped to reproduce the actuality of life, and to the observant reader foretell his leap across the gap that separates the impossible dreams of *The Red Count* from the *plate réalité* of *Sad Loves*.

Mountain Torrents (*Aquazzoni in montagna*) (1876) is a rollicking play with a suggestion of Eugène Labiche in it; *The Late Repentance* (*La tardi ravveduta*) (1888), the story of a marchioness who, having been an actress, returns to the stage, repenting late, but not too late, that she had ever left her proper sphere. *The Thread* (*Il Filo, scena filisofico-morale per marionette*) (1883), *The Cat's Claw* (*La Zampa del gatto*) (published 1888), and *The Siren* (*La Sirena*) (1889), all of this period, are comedies. Probably the best known of Giacosa's plays of this very fruitful ten years are *Surrender at Discretion* (*Resa a discrezione*) (1885) and *Luisa* (1883). The latter is a modern problem play in verse — a mongrel type in any case, and Giacosa's attempt to combine the uncongenial elements is not a success. It is the only play of Giacosa's which has suicide as a finale, — the heroine in this case takes her own life to save her lover from her husband, a reckless reprobate. In spite of its unsavory

subject-matter, *Luisa* is not a vulgar sordid drama of illicit love. The love of the hero and heroine is sincere, passionate, a purifying flame. Giacosa has been criticized for cutting the Gordian knot of his situation with the dulled and commonplace blade of suicide. His defense is, "It happens in real life that people take their own lives, so why not in a play?" — lame enough and totally unconvincing unless the psychology of the situation absolutely dictates suicide. Although the effectiveness of *Luisa* is much hurt by the alien medium of verse, the play nevertheless laid the foundation of Giacosa's reputation as a social critic, and ushers in a long series of successful dramas of this type.

Surrender at Discretion is of quite different caliber and nature, being a true comedy of manners, a scathing but accomplished attack on the uselessness and corruption of Italian high society, presenting a "high life" group, — selfish, foolish, idle and criminal. These are placed in contrast with a young explorer and scientist, a Sir Galahad in ideals and principles. It is at once evident that Giacosa has taken a great step. No longer are the characters invented or imaginary; they are studied from life, and set in everyday situations. These unspeakably vacuous men of leisure passing their lives as *cicisbei* to a prosperous courtesan, these spoiled countesses who gamble away fortune and reputation to recover both by unscrupulous coquetry, these vultures of society who feed upon dead bodies, — they are people whom Giacosa has seen and known.

Elena, the heroine of this play, having heard that the young explorer Andrea Sàrmi is about to start on an Arctic expedition, wagers with her friends that she will prevent

his going. She has never met Sarmi, though she knows him to be serious, eager, living for his science; but she feels so sure of her own powers of fascination that she is willing to stake her all on her ability to lure him from his purpose. By means of all the devices of an accomplished coquette she does succeed in making him fall in love with her and abandon his expedition. But, what she did not bargain for, she falls in love with him. Sarmi discovers, too late to save his scientific plans, her perfidy and her plot against him. His denunciation of her is like the lash of a whip: "Madame, the boldest woman of the street could have done no better." He leaves her to despair, for she really loves him and tries — to no purpose — to win him back. It is only when he learns that in desperation she is about to go off to live with one of her former *cicisbei* that he returns to her, to save her from this final degradation.

As may plainly be seen, *Surrender at Discretion* savors strongly of Gallic influence. It is in some respects a conventional situation with conventionalized characters, but there are good scenes which are quite freshly inspired, and there is about all an economy of means and material that is most acceptable and promising.

This play is the first of Giacosa's which exhibits that aspect of this work which is most emphasized by his critics, — his prepossession with moral situations and problems. It is a French critic, Maurice Muret, who calls attention to Giacosa's social usefulness in this connection. Like Ibsen, his far greater contemporary, Giacosa cut to cure; but he was no profound thinker, only a good-natured, sensible man who having passed through life's vicissitudes with his eyes open, is willing to give good sound

bourgeois advice about human relations. The guiding stars in his moral firmament are personal integrity, honesty, directness and charity, a sense of justice tempered by humanity and sympathy. Giacosa dreamed of a new moral world where these virtues functioned. But it was his own *bonhommie* that betrayed him and deranged his scheme. Of course this quality endeared him as nothing else could have done to his public, who wanted and needed this ready and comfortable faith, but it came near to undoing him as a dramatic artist. His desire to supply each play with a happy ending, a conclusive curtain, a dénouement acceptable to a bourgeois audience, led him many times into lapses from dramatic logic and from entire intellectual honesty.

These illogical and manipulated conclusions are not, however, due wholly to Giacosa's complaisance; they grow out of that optimistic philosophy which will not admit an insoluble problem. It is because of this that he more than once falls into the trap that caught even Molière in *Le Misanthrope* and *Tartuffe*, where, rather than not offer a solution of his complication, he solves it by means of what may be called a ratiocinative *deus ex machina*, quite external to the nature of the complex. So in *Surrender at Discretion*, for example, the only logical ending would have been tragic, involving the complete defeat and dishonor of Sarmi and the triumph of the treacherous and still stony-hearted Elena, whose conversion in the play is especially unconvincing; also in *Sad Loves* the dénouement is accidental, not organic; and the same thing must be said of *As the Leaves*.

No doubt this illogicality and obscurantism seemed to Giacosa and to his pleased audiences only a necessary

part of "holding up the banner of the ideal", perhaps even an essential procedure in vindicating a beneficent order of the universe. Giacosa undoubtedly felt that the society of his age and nation needed lessons in the simple virtues of honesty and purity. It is quite consistent to say that he presented these plays first of all to please and amuse; but as a by-product and collateral effect he aimed to cure his age of certain dangerous social maladies.

Like Paolo Ferrari he felt that there was need of upholding the rights and claims of society against the individual, rather than asserting the rights of the individual as against society which has been the theme of most contemporary dramatists of other countries. Is there something in Italian social culture that explains and justifies this difference in point of view? Apropos of this very query, Jean Dornis, in *Le Théâtre Italien Contemporain*, makes a suggestive contrast between Italian and French society. The social structure of France, she says, is built on a basis so well defined and so firm that there is no need to state it or to define it afresh; the natural *unity* of civilization and morality is so compact that there is no need to emphasize the State. On the contrary the dramatist does, and must at times, attack these very institutions which, so long established and becoming more and more fixed, become also more and more tyrannical, more hostile to individual initiative, doing violence to emotion. Italian civilization, on the contrary, is founded on passion, on sentiment, on family prestige and political ascendancy, rather than on rational organization and coöperation. The rights of the individual need no vindication — they are already too much emphasized. That Italy has recently awakened to her great need of some

social solidarity and coöperative responsibility is due in some measure to Giacosa and a few other artists who have shared his spirit, who as dramatists have preached a crusade against the frivolity, the criminal luxury and the more criminal unproductiveness, as well as against the more overt sins and crimes of a society of leisure.

The first night of the initial run of *Sad Loves* may be said to be the most significant date in the history of contemporary drama in Italy, for it definitely signalized the triumph of the naturalistic school. Of course, there had been naturalistic, even Verist plays offered before, — no less luminaries than Giovanni Verga, and Luigi Capuana having produced plays of this sort. But their success was dubious and their permanence by no means assured. *Sad Loves* cleared the air, and its complete success established in the Italian theatre the principle of the scrupulous presentation of life on the stage.

It could not be otherwise than that Giacosa should have been deeply influenced by the theories and the work of the great French naturalists. He was peculiarly sensitive to literary influence, — and even if he were not, he could not have escaped the teachings of such masters as Zola, Flaubert, the De Goncourt brothers, naturalists, Alphonse Daudet and De Maupassant, realists, but especially perhaps of Henri Becque, the dramatist, two of whose plays, *Les Corbeaux* and *La Parisienne,* were greatly admired by him. The doctrines of this group of great Frenchmen have become familiar to students of literary history in some of their dicta that have become almost proverbial. "Art is life seen through a temperament." "The drama is a slice of life." "Never say 'How good!' or 'How beautiful!' but always 'How true!'"

Such in essence is the doctrine whose principles Giacosa tried to incarnate in *Sad Loves*. He chose a bourgeois *milieu*, utterly commonplace; his persons are merely men and women of the middle class, no better, no worse than the rest of us; nothing "happens" in the entire course of the play. Of course Giacosa, with the peculiar bent we have discussed above, was not content to let it rest at that, he gave it a moral, a didactic bearing. And those critics who condemned him as being a mere photographer were either unjust, or were blind to the characteristic turn that Giacosa gave to the play. Yet in spite of the moralizing, Giacosa did not sacrifice the verity of his picture; his first critics, not prepared to appreciate this, did say: "But this is not art, this is photography." In spite of much severe disapproval, in spite even of a few unappreciative hisses, *Sad Loves* triumphed and with it the Verist school in the Italian theatre.

The Sad Loves are those of Fabrizio Arcieri, a young advocate, and Emma Scarli, the wife of his employer and friend, Giulio Scarli. The lovers feel for each other an irresistible passion which the husband does not suspect. He regards his wife as the purest and truest creature alive, wholly his. The lovers, who are forced to resort to every degrading subterfuge in order to meet and to conceal their passion, suffer morally and mentally. With consummate art Giacosa brings out all the banality, the sordidness of adultery, its mean pettinesses and lies, its deceptions and utter commonplaceness. Emma, in the midst of the most terrible doubts and fears, is forced to receive her lover while drying her child's linen by the fire. She turns from a passionate scene with him in which she has wept and loved, to settling her accounts with the servants

who has been to market, — "thread 25, butter 15, potatoes 3" — a most masterly and convincing stroke! But in spite of this sordidness and disillusion, they cannot part. "Things like this drag on indefinitely," says one of the characters to them, "It would be better to break off immediately"; but they cannot.

Fabrizio's father, an old renegade, forces a confession from Emma and armed with this knowledge forges a note on Scarli, certain that the advocate will pay. The complications arising out of this reveal to Scarli the relation between his wife and Fabrizio. It is a thunderclap to him, who has thought of his wife as a semi-divinity. What does he do now? Does he threaten and murder? No! He falls into a chair and sobs like a child. What an undramatic or perhaps only untheatrical situation! The lovers plan then to go away together and Scarli, suspecting this, takes the child, a little girl Gemma, for a walk. Emma and Fabrizio make their preparations, but at the last moment Emma, seeing the big doll of her little daughter lying on a chair, feels her motherhood awaken; her courage abandons her. "Oh! When she comes in she will expect to find me here. She'll call me in her dear little voice. What can they tell her?" Fabrizio feels that all is over between them. He cannot stay and she cannot go. The lovers exchange a last farewell and he goes. Soon Scarli returns with the child. He is surprised to find his wife still there. The little girl throws herself into her mother's arms and Scarli says, "You didn't go then, Emma? You did right. There is always the baby. Now we are partners in a useful task and it will be this way all our lives. Things like this never come to an end." The education of the child Gemma, assuring her a happier

life than her parents have known, is to be the work of the household. Scarli cannot pardon, but for the sake of Gemma he calls a truce.

Giacosa, though he followed the Becque formula in *Sad Loves*, which he somewhat ironically called a "comedy," was too human and kindly to achieve that impersonality, the impassibility of Flaubert, which was Becque's greatest artistic asset. Neither did he share in that "*rosserie*" which Filon defines in his little book, *De Dumas à Rostand*. Of the "*comédie rosse*" he says, "It consists in a lack of conscience, a kind of vivacious ingenuity, the state of mind of people who have never had a sense of morality, who live always in mixed issues, or in injustice, as a fish lives in water — the reign of evil is established without apparent change in the familiar relationships of society or of everyday language." This kind of comedy is seen in its essence in Becque's *La Parisienne* and in certain other plays of the Théâtre Libre; in Italy in some of the works of Bracco like *L'Infidele* and in Giannino Antona-Traversi's comedies of high life, *La Civetta* and *La Scalata all' Olimpo*. But Giacosa's outcome is entirely different from this, — Emma and Fabrizio are keenly conscious of the moral issue involved in their relationship. They are quite aware that what they are doing is wrong and they suffer. In all the characters is this clear consciousness of ethical issues. Giacosa solved the problem as best he could, retaining the integrity of the family, justifying the husband, packing off the lover, disposing of everybody in a bourgeois and highly moral manner. That the dénouement is not the logical and inevitable conclusion of the play is a grave fault. This Giacosa undoubtedly knew. He compromised with his own dénouement in the speech he gives to

Scarli: "These things never end." One feels that Ibsen would not have evaded the issue by the introduction of the sentimental business of the doll, but would have sent the two lovers off together, each the other's nemesis and accuser. Giacosa, as has been indicated in another connection, was too humanly interested in his men and women to drive the point home, but in spite of his weakness *Sad Loves* remains the best of Italian Verist dramas.

Rights of the Soul (*Diritti dell'anima*) (1894), Giacosa's next play, is an Ibsenite study in feminine psychology, — Ibsenite by actual imitation rather than merely by tendency, for Giacosa was under the direct sway of the great Norwegian and intended to translate his idiom into Italian by means of *Rights of the Soul.* It is the most purely intellectual of his plays, a geometrical problem, a ratiocinative exercise. There is a touch of the Scandinavian frost in the cold analysis of a woman's soul. It may have been because of its purely abstract nature, perhaps because of conscious effort on Giacosa's part, that *Rights of the Soul* escapes his besetting fault and drives home its conclusion clear to the head, not for a moment evading the question at issue.

Like *Sad Loves, Rights of the Soul* is concerned with a question of adultery, foregone in the former play, contemplated in the latter, a matter of intellectual unfaithfulness. A certain Paolo discovers from some old letters that his wife had been loved and courted by his cousin, Luciano, who has recently committed suicide. It is clear from the letters that Anna, the wife, had refused everything, — even to see her sorely stricken adorer; in consequence of her firmness, Luciano has killed himself. Into his satisfaction at his wife's fidelity there pierces a terrible

doubt. She was true to him, — but did she love Luciano? Was she adulterous in thought? When his wife appears he questions her brutally, twisting her very heartstrings, violating her feminine tenderness, until she can bear it no longer; and bursts out, "Very well then! Yes! I loved him and him only, all the time I was living with you. All these years I have guarded your peace of mind; now your curiosity is awakened and to make up for lost time you try to violate my soul, to pry into its innermost depths. But you can't walk into people's souls by the front door; you have to creep into them by stealth." He must be made to see that the rights of the soul are inviolable; her memories and dreams of Luciano are sacred and must remain so. Paolo feels that he is no longer loved and in a rage he orders her from the house. He repents too late. Anna was longing for this order and now joyously runs to put on her street clothes. The slam of the door as Nora Helmer leaves *The Doll's House* finds its echo in Anna's leaving her husband's house where she has suffered an unforgivable violence done to her inmost being.

It is difficult to account for the hostile tone of the criticism that this one-act play of Giacosa's has evoked. One feels that it must be due to the fact that he did not supply it with the conventional pleasant ending; the situation is interesting and pathetic; the emotional reactions of the two persons are psychologically sound; the dénouement natural and satisfying in the premises. Two faults it has: the dramatist is too obviously present; we are reminded that the play is a *tour de force*, and that its author is constantly in the background manipulating his figures to his own ends, — that, therefore, in this game the dice are

loaded. In the second place the play is too short for the complete presentation of the material; Giacosa cannot compress into one act all he wanted to say, all that needed to be said. To this brevity and concentration has been sacrificed clarity and verisimilitude.

The success of *As the Leaves* (*Come le foglie*) (1900) was the crowning achievement of Giacosa's long career and designated him for the time the first prose dramatist of Italy. Scarcely ever, perhaps indeed never, in the history of the Italian theatre had there been so immediate and so striking a success; certainly the unanimity of admiration has never been equaled. Public and critics both joined in enthusiastic approbation of the man upon whom the mantle of Goldoni had fallen, who could write an honest, clean, wholesome piece of work which could, as the theatre should, "*corriger les mœurs en riant.*" With this play Giacosa had delivered a bold and telling stroke in his great social campaign. It is the protest of bourgeois good sense against the excesses of the super-refined.

Giovanni Rosani, a type studied "*sur le vif*", at the age of sixty-five years had lived only for his family — to spare them effort and pain; he has earned money, lots of money, so that his daughter Nennele, his son Tommy and his second wife have all been kept in cotton wool. Suddenly, through no fault of his own, Rosani loses his money. Giacosa proceeds to study the effect of poverty and the necessity of making an effort on the characters of these people. The family is saved from utter destitution by the kindness of a cousin, Massimo, a man self-made but in no invidious sense. It is a series of remarkable portraits that Giacosa has drawn: Rosani, honest, commonplace, good to the utmost, but unintelligent, too much wrapped

up in mere money-making to perceive the disintegration of his household; his wife, spoiled completely by luxury, characterless, even to the point of dishonesty, quite ready to be unfaithful; Tommy, his son, a masterpiece of character drawing which struck home in more than one Italian breast, — spoiled by luxury he is afflicted with that worst of Italian sins, laziness; he is a lovable good-for-nothing, completely lacking power of decision and continuity of action. Nennele his sister is of different caliber. She too has been reared in luxury, spared all effort, but at the moment of need she is not found wanting, but picks up her burden and carries it with a will. Massimo, the self-made cousin, is the embodiment of all that Giacosa and the Italian bourgeois public admired most. An orphan, he has made himself rich by his own efforts, and in rubbing elbows with all sorts of people he has acquired a large humanity. He is virile, good, generous, and loyal. Somewhat platitudinous and given to pointing a moral, easily triumphing over Tommy, he is precisely the right type of hero for a middle-class drama, and the public was immensely pleased with him. It is the conflict and contrast of these characters that make the play.

The family, ruined in Florence, moves to Switzerland. Here Nennele manages the household, Rosani works in Massimo's factory, and Tommy and his mother carry on more or less shady intrigues — the one with two artists, the other with an adventuress who has taken a liking to him. Nennele takes a position as governess. But through the extravagance of the two weak members, the family fortunes go from bad to worse. Massimo, who has fallen in love with Nennele and been once refused by her, is

continually at hand, giving aid and advice. Finally things come to a terrible pass; Mme Rosani is in desperate trouble, Tommy goes off to marry his adventuress, Nennele, in despair, resolves to do away with herself. Almost in the act of suicide she detects Massimo in the shadowy garden, and realizes that he is unobtrusively watching over her. She suddenly realizes his goodness and its value and calls to him to come to her side.

As the Leaves is excellently managed from a technical point of view. The characters are well defined and distinguished; the dialogue is crisp, witty, pungent; there is an upward curve of interest and suspense until the dénouement; it gives also a remarkable illusion of life and living. It may safely be called the best of Giacosa's plays.

In an address on the occasion of the inauguration of a bust of Paolo Ferrari in 1898 Giacosa spoke these words: "Adultery and the love interest have been far too exclusively the subject of comedy. Let us mix in our plays ambition and anger, avarice, pride, revolt, the sorrow of fathers and mothers, betrayals of friendship, humiliations coming from physical infirmities and those still more biting coming from moral infirmities and intellectual tares. Then you shall see whether or not the comic stage will be rejuvenated and will become more living and real than at the time when amorous perversions triumphed." From a man who had just written two plays on adultery, *Sad Loves* and *The Rights of the Soul*, this statement is a bit baffling. Nevertheless his call for new subject matter was pertinent and voiced a crying need of the theatre. In his next two plays — *As the Leaves* and *The Stronger* — he joined practice to precept and the amorous passion

takes a decidedly secondary place, while adultery is entirely absent from both. His timely innovation was welcomed with enthusiasm. The old themes were pretty threadbare, and consequently the study of the fallen fortunes of a family in *As the Leaves*, of a question of probity in *The Stronger* had the charm of freshness and the prestige of importance.

Cesare Nalli of *The Stronger* (*Il Più forte*) (1905) is a great financier of the family of Le Sage's "Turcaret" and Balzac's "Mercadet", who has amassed a huge fortune by means which, if not illegal, are certainly not nicely honorable. A wolf and a devourer in the business world, he is at home the tenderest of husbands, the kindest of fathers. He has brought up his son Silvio to be an artist, has encouraged him to enjoy the money so plentifully supplied, has cultivated in him the most scrupulous sense of honor. By an accident Silvio discovers his father's crookedness. Shocked and revolted, he feels that he cannot consent to enjoy a fortune gathered by questionable means. He cannot cease loving his father and casts no reproaches upon him. The scene in which the father and son have an explanation is the capital one of the play and brings out Giacosa's thesis, — Which is the Stronger? To any one with a knowledge of Giacosa the answer is obvious; right must triumph. Silvio, through love of virtue and uprightness, is able to renounce all his possession and even the love of his wife — a weak little woman who cannot live without luxury — Silvio, in the consciousness of virtue, is *The Stronger*.

The Stronger, particularly the character of Cesare Nalli, has been frequently compared with its French prototype *Les Affaires sont les affaires* of Octave Mirbeau, much to

the disadvantage of *The Stronger*. Giacosa's financier has not the consistent hardness, the logical sternness of Mirbeau's Isadore Sechart, nor does Giacosa push the play — his old fault — through to its logical conclusion. Cesare Nalli is a shadowy figure compared with Isadore Sechart, a pastel rather than a dry point, and his son Silvio shares this vagueness; it is the secondary characters who, by an interesting paradox, stand out. Indeed, in Giacosa's plays this fact can scarcely be called paradoxical, for the minor and secondary personages in all the important plays are the ones depicted with the firmest strokes. As a matter of fact, Giacosa's grasp on character was not so notable as his mastery of situation and his clear-sightedness in moral issues.

Giacosa also took an interest in what we may call a neglected if not deserted branch of art allied to drama, — the operatic libretto. He longed to renew the fallen art of the librettist and wrote, together with Luigi Illica, books for the following music of Giacomo Puccini: *La Bohème*, *La Tosca*, and *Madame Butterfly*. They are assuredly not very successful as literature. They inevitably suffer from being obliged to adapt themselves to music to which after all they are external, but at least they are better than most other librettos.

By way of summary we may reflect the thought with which this study of Giacosa began, that he is the bridge, the connecting link between the Neo-Romantics and the true moderns. In turn neo-romantic, semi-realistic, veristic, genuinely realistic, with an Ibsenite interlude, he followed closely the intellectual and dramatic fashions of his artistic lifetime. His changes of manner, however, must not be charged to superficial versatility or to in-

difference. There is none of that copious fertility which merely follows the mode; his plays are the product of slow and painstaking elaboration. Rather is his work the product of his intimate and varied contact with the life of his time, the response of his sensitive soul to the changing psychic and social atmosphere of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It was late in life when in the realistic bourgeois comedy he finally found himself; he seemed to grow more modern as he grew older. His first romanticism, however, was quite as truthful and sincere a manifestation of his artistic personality as was the verism of the last remarkable plays.

In each of the dramatic genres he essayed Giacosa has left a work, in some more than one, of genuine significance even when not absolutely vital and enduring. His gift to the Italian stage was a body of new themes, a corpus of new subject-matter; he renovated the drama with his fresh and clean ideas and clear style. He coöperated nobly in the creation of the national theatre. From any point of view and according to any standard, we must reckon Giuseppe Giacosa one of the notable writers of the modern movement.

CHAPTER III

The Early Realists

The literature of Italy of the nineteenth century, like that of all literary countries of the same period, exhibits the two strains of realism, — one the attempt to produce the effect of actual life, the other the attempt to reproduce the actuality of life itself, sometimes distinguished as realism and naturalism.

As in France the realism of Balzac, of Dumas *fils*, of Augier, gave place to the naturalism of Flaubert, of Becque, and the dramatists of the Théâtre Libre, so in Italy, Ferrari and Torelli gave place to Verga and Capuana.

Realism did not by any means begin its life as a bantling flung naked on the rocks; as a matter of fact it inherited a rather comfortable property from its predecessor, the Romanticism which took its rise about 1825, and which went through its several phases within the fifty years following that date. Some of the items of that legacy are: rebellion against classical or other traditional authority; the doctrine of the popularization of literature, the appeal to the common people, the use of common people and their affairs as literary material, — a result of revolutionary thinking everywhere; the recognition of the moral and practical function of novel and drama, — for example, to teach national loyalty; a vision of historical verity and truth to local and temporal atmosphere which

on the whole informed the large mass of plays based by the Romanticists on the national past and on the Middle Ages; some skill in psychological analysis, in the identification of motives and of passion, and in the handling of subjective material.

Realism rejected the heroics and the sentimentality of the Romanticists. It vastly expanded the range of practical affairs and social problems treated in drama; it became more convinced and more scientific in local and temporal color, and in the study of inner motives and subjective states. But it is not unfair to say that realism existed in the new Romanticism as a germ, that it becomes a bud in Ferrari and Torelli, blossoms in Giacosa, and comes to fruition in the naturalism of Verga. Italian Verism leaned rather toward naturalism than realism, tending to reproduce life on the stage rather than to give the effect of life.

The drama in France had its realists in those great artists who must be mentioned so many times in any account of modern literature — Augier, Dumas *fils*, and Pailleron with their followers, who comprise the large body of recent dramatists, but the other camp, the naturalists, besides Zola, counted Henri Becque and the artists of the Théâtre Libre. In England and in Germany the same two schools or groups arose, and in Italy too, although the realists were in a large majority, there was a naturalistic school who called themselves Verists and who nourished their artistic youth upon the dicta of Emile Zola.

It is interesting and remarkable that in the Italian theatre the success of the Verists was achieved without serious difficulty, — remarkable in view of the fact that

in other European countries their work was hailed with a storm of disapproval. In Germany, France, and England the two decades, the eighties and nineties, were a period of intense struggle, when the moderns and the radicals were battling with the conservatives for the right of free expression in the theatre. The battle between the naturalists who were the modern party demanding freedom and the right of a hearing, and the conservatives of all sorts, whether genuine idealists, ordinary mossbacks, or mere politicians, centered about three institutions founded and maintained by the new dramatists and their backers,—the "Théâtre Libre" of André Antoine in Paris, the "Freie Bühne" in Germany, modeled after its French prototype, and the "Independent Theatre" in London, sponsored and defended by Shaw, by William Archer, and by most of the dramatic writers who have made a name in England in recent years. It is curious that in Italy there is nothing to correspond to these significant institutions and experiments. There was, to be sure, much criticism of the "crudity" of the new school, much exclaiming that its product was not art, but there was no organized or even unanimous opposition. The plays of Giacosa, Verga, and Capuana, the three capital representatives of the theatre of Verism, had no difficulty in establishing themselves.

The fact that there was no call in Italy for a free theatre may be accounted for by these considerations: in the first place, the Italian is artistically the most hospitable person in the world; he has always been ready to accept anything that he adjudged well done. In the second place, he is not easily offended on the score of morality, he has a long tradition of questionable theatricals, be-

ginning with Machiavelli and Aretino and continuing unbroken to our time. Furthermore, in Italy the Church is supreme in the guardianship of morals and the lay public is not concerned as it is in England and in France with the formation of a respectable public opinion. In the third place, the battle between literary radicals and conservatives was fought out in Italy not in the theatre but in the fields of lyric poetry and the novel. And in the fourth place, foreign, particularly ultra-montane influence was very powerful, and what had won for itself acceptance in France was likely to be accepted without question in Italy.

The quarrel between the "Idealists" and the Verists had burst into flame in 1877–1878 apropos of the volume of lyrics by a poet who called himself Lorenzo Stecchetti, *Postuma*. In 1878 appeared another volume by the same man, *Nuova Polemica*, with a long preface which was in a sense the manifesto of the Verists. They were at this time a group of young and ardent spirits who had rallied to the defense of *Postuma*, literary revolutionists who affected an independent realism both in form and content. They voiced the inevitable revolt, a demand for greater liberty on the part of the new generation, cramped within the narrow limits and arbitrary boundaries of the "Idealists", who had made a literary fetish of Manzoni, and whose main champion at this time was Cavalotti. The reaction against Manzoni-ism took two forms in poetry, that of Carducci, who went to Greece and Rome for inspiration, and that of Stecchetti, who turned to the life around him. The theory of art which guided them is a familiar one. "Art should reproduce life. It is neither moral nor immoral but simply good or

bad as art. They who accuse the new school of obscenity or irreligion confound criticism of thesis with criticism of form, the true distinction being between authors who write well and those who write ill. Life must be portrayed whole, in its deformity as well as in its beauty, and Art . . . must not be torn away from nastiness." To exemplify his theory of art, Lorenzo Stecchetti wrote successive volumes of poetry which "out-Baudelaired" Baudelaire in super-refinement verging on perversion, and were more meticulous in detail than those of Leconte de Lisle. His tradition in verse was later taken up, immeasurably expanded, and sublimated by Gabriele D'Annunzio, "*ce terrible homme, ce Baudelaire effréné.*" Giovanni Pascoli, too, followed closely in Stecchetti's footsteps, and what Stecchetti did for lyric poetry Giovanni Verga did ten years later for the novel. Indeed Verga continued and so expanded Stecchetti's work that it is he who actually stands as the supreme representative of the school. His series *The Vanquished* holds the same place in Italian naturalism as Zola's *Rougon-Macquart* series does in French. For a time there was keen opposition to the new writers, but when the smoke cleared away the Verists were found to be established on firm standing-ground; they had most evidently come to stay and there was no need of fighting their battle again in the theatre.

The success of Giacosa's *Sad Loves* was enough in itself to show that the triumph of the Verists was definite; while in the field of criticism they found a spokesman and champion in the Sicilian, Luigi Capuana (1839–), who joined practice to precept by writing stories and two plays, one of them, *Giacinta* (1888), being meritorious, and the other, *Enchantment* (*Malía*), a story of a young

girl's perverted passion, being quite successful in itself and famous as the vehicle of the actors Giovanni Grasso and Mimi Aguglia.

In the preface to his *Giacinta*, Capuana voices his ideal of a practicable drama, which may be taken as reflecting the theory of the whole school. "I set out to simplify the conduct of the action, and the form of the dialogue. Simplifying the action meant to me debarrassing it of a great part of those conventions . . . the long abuse of which . . . has led to their being regarded as almost of the same nature as dramatic art. . . . Simplifying the dialogue meant the setting aside of all ornament, of all ornamentation falsely called literary, originating in the intervention of the personality of the author in the manifestation of the thoughts and feelings of the characters; and securing a form, close, rapid . . . able to give the illusion of spoken dialogue without losing its quality of art." If Capuana failed to write up to this fine formula it was probably because his native gifts were those of critic rather than dramatist. It is true that neither of his plays exhibits the working out of his program. *Giacinta* was a failure in the theatre and *Enchantment* achieved a *succès de scandal* rather than an artistic popularity.

It remained for Giovanni Verga to exemplify the principles laid down by his contemporary and fellow-islander, and to fulfill the promise of the Verists in drama. Verga (1840–) may be said to have made a faithful literary chronicle of the inner and intimate life of Southern Italy and of his native Sicily; and this to such good effect that a few years ago his European fame rivaled that of D'Annunzio. This reputation has, however, waned with the decline of the vogue of the realistic novel; although now

with a perspective of twenty years to stabilize our judgment we may safely place him as the chief of the Verists, the most eminent writer of local novels and plays. His plays of the fisherfolk, the shepherds, and the small-town people of Sicily are unsurpassed and inimitable. He did not confine himself to the country or to Sicily, but wrote several novels and at least two plays whose interests and events lay outside his native locality; but it is undoubtedly true that he is at his best when his feet are firmly planted on the soil, when his inspiration is drawn from his own people. The peasant of his own country is to Verga an open book; his sympathetic knowledge of his countrymen is so profound, his fidelity to fact so scrupulous, that his plays may well rank as trustworthy documents in the social history of unhappy Sicily.

Giovanni Verga, born at Catania in 1840, started his career as an ultra-romantic romancer in the taste of his times. But between 1874 and 1881 he executed a complete artistic turn-over, for in the latter year he published *The Malavoglia Family* (*I Malavoglia*) (1881). With this book, his masterpiece and indeed one of the greatest novels of the age, did Verga thus abruptly establish the technic and tone of the veristic novel. With photographic detail and scrupulous truthfulness he paints the life of the Sicilian fisherfolk of the type to be seen in the coast villages. *The Malavoglia Family* was planned as the first of a vast series after the model, doubtless, of Zola's *Rougon-Macquart* system, to be called *The Vanquished* (*I Vinti*), in which would be depicted the experiences of those miserable ones who are beaten in the race, conquered in the battle of life.

Verga wrote only one other book in the series, *Maestro Don Gesualdo*. In 1884 appeared a volume of short stories of peasant life, among them *Rustic Chivalry* (*Cavalleria Rusticana*), which he later dramatized. From this time on he wrote in this manner, recording as realistically as possible aspects of Sicilian peasant life. The few excursions he made into another, more romantic manner, such as in the plays, *In the Porter's Lodge* (*In Portineria*) and *The Fox-hunt* (*La Caccia alla Volpe*) have little worth and less significance. Luckily Verga had his impulse to Romanticism early and exhausted it in his novels, so that by the time he began to write for the theatre he had quite established himself in the manner which was his natural expression.

The passage quoted above from Capuana's preface gives more clearly than any passage Verga ever wrote himself the principles and theory which underlay his dramatic writing. He never used the old sure-fire situations and plots; he cared not a jot for scenic effects; he never bothered himself about the poetry. Of course, it would be most misleading to say that he had no regard for style, for his choice of words, his turns of speech, his balance of sentence were almost meticulously calculated to give an atmosphere of actuality to the dialogue. Like the De Goncourts, whose name must keep recurring in any discussion of naturalism, he had his notebook constantly in hand, jotting down the details that he incorporated into his plays. It was a hobby of Verga's to collect homely and popular proverbs, believing as he did that they conferred a distinctive flavor of the country. The plays are full of country maxims and epigrams gathered from the lips of the peasants.

Unlike the great Frenchmen, however, Verga exercised careful selection as to what details he should use, incorporating only those which had essentially constructive value. It is not, however, inconsistent to say that Flaubert's doctrine of the impassibility of the artist is also an essential part of Verga's artistic creed. The artist, he asserts, must stand aside and watch the "determinism of facts"; the human soul must be studied (to use Flaubert's phrase which might well be Verga's) "*avec l'impartialité qu'on met dans les sciences physiques;*" the observer must refrain from sympathy or judgment. The preface to *I Malavoglia* might, indeed, have been written by Flaubert.

But Verga does not live up to his own Spartan theory; he is too human, too sympathetic with those who suffer; his irony is quite often the outburst of a heart whose sympathy lies too deep for tears. "The vanquished" have all his love; they may be low and squalid and even loathsome, but as he sees them these things are their misfortune, not their fault. He shows men ignorant, superstitious, violent. Life is in his world a pitiless struggle for existence; survival is achieved only by war to the knife. His wretched peasant, continually face to face with starvation, must take whatever means of self-preservation he can; he becomes the wolf, as in *The Wolf Hunt,* as in *The She-Wolf.*

Since Verga chose to view life under this aspect, since he can see only "the hog in nature", his plays lack certain finer qualities of dramatic art, — inspiration and emotional exaltation. But bathed as they are in a crude, raw, unsparing light of reality, they are powerful, convincing, majestic in their unshrinking truth to life. He

is not in any degree a doctrinaire. Verism is not a mere fashion with him but the natural form into which his material flows.

Verga's first play was his dramatization of his short story, *Rustic Chivalry*, which with the accompaniment of Mascagni's music has made the tour of the world. A drama of singular intensity and concentration, he has packed into the one act of nine scenes a whole three-acts' worth of passion. In other hands it might easily have become merely a drama of situation; Paolo Ferrari or Giacosa might have dwelt on the scenes of sentiment; not so Verga, who moves inexorably on, nor pauses to write any "good parts" in which an actor might display his virtuosity.

The action passes in a tiny village near Catania in Sicily. Turiddu, conscripted, having served in the army for two years, returns to find that his promised wife, Lola, has forgotten him and, expert in coquetry, has married the carter, Alfio. Out of spite, he woos an orphan girl in the village, Santuzza, and betrays her. Lola, jealous, receives him again as her lover and he deserts Santuzza. She, about to give birth to a child, begs him to marry her, for she still adores her betrayer, when he scorns her and goes off again with Lola. The girl, mad with jealousy, hastens to tell the carter of the relation his wife has with Turiddu; a barbarous duel with knives follows, and Turiddu is killed.

Those who know the *Rustic Chivalry* only as an opera where it is burdened and tamed by Mascagni's music can scarcely imagine the reality and the brutality of the drama itself. This Lola and Santuzza, this Turiddu and Alfio, are the men and women of the fierce Sicilian country-

side, wearing the clothes, speaking the language of rude peasants, torn by their passions, hungry with their cravings, blind with their superstitions. In this crude and mighty play Verga is at his strongest.

In the Porter's Lodge (*In Porteneria*) (1885) shifts the scene from Catania to a quarter of the city of Milan occupied by the lowest class of town dwellers. Malia, a virtuous young girl, is madly in love with Carlino, a printer's apprentice: according to what might be called a naturalistic tradition, Malia is afflicted with consumption, which is aggravated by her unhappy passion. Carlino, although he knows that the proper wife for him would be Malia, is himself perversely taken with her sister, Gilda, a prostitute. The wretched Malia finally dies of her moral suffering, which brings on an acute stage of her malady, and in the last terrific scene Carlino, over the bed where she lies dying, makes violent love to the dishonored sister. This is a scene worthy of Henri Becque, full of bitter irony, unrelieved by humor or sympathy. The considerable success of *In the Porter's Lodge* did not, luckily, prevent Verga from returning to his proper field. An interval of ten years separates this from the next play, one of his best, *The She-Wolf* (*La Lupa*) (1896). Pina, the She-Wolf, is a village Messalina, a depraved creature, who in her lust for a young farmer, Nanni, sacrifices to him her daughter and her property, and finally, having maddened him beyond endurance by her machinations, dies at his hands. *The She-Wolf* was followed by the *Bozetti Scenici*, *The Wolf Hunt* (*La Caccia al Lupo*) (1902), and *The Fox Hunt* (*La Caccia alla Volpe*) (1902). The former is another abstract from Sicilian life. A husband, knowing that his wife receives a lover,

returns suddenly to catch the man, but he is too well concealed. Unable to find anything, the husband goes out again, locking the door behind him. Then the lover appears, crazy with fear, thinking only of saving his own skin, caring not one whit for his mistress, seeking only his own escape. But the woman, furious at his cowardice and his abandonment of her, screams for help as though he were assaulting her. Her husband returns gun in hand and calls to his comrades outside, "Come on in here! The wolf we were looking for is caught in my trap." The other play, *The Fox Hunt*, is Verga's one excursion into the society drama, fortunately an unsuccessful one. His last play is another dramatization, — of his own novel, *Dal tuo al mio* (1905).

The main criticism to be offered on the plays of Giovanni Verga is on the score of their violence. They all seem to have need of a "*fait divers*" to hold them together. Every one is reeking with lust, crime and murder; adultery, suicide, and homicide seemed to be his stock in trade. He has missed all the poetry, the sunny good humor, the native courtesy and piety of Sicilian life. E. Boutet, usually a keen critic, maintains that this very violence of Verga's vitiates to a large degree the impression of reality one might derive from the plays. Verga, he says, pretends that his people are real, but he is, as a matter of fact, all the while playing to the gallery, showing not the real Sicilians but those stock characteristics which foreigners attribute conventionally to them; characteristics enhanced by the heated imagination of one who may well be classed as a neurotic. But Boutet fails to see or chooses to ignore the fact that Verga views only one aspect of his subject, the piteous and the

disagreeable. To every artist must be accorded the right to choose his subject-matter, and the angle from which he will view it; if by choice or by temperament he sees evil and disaster alone, his work is only less complete, not less true. Verga's limitations are partly the limitations of his mind and partly those of his method, they are inherent in the appeal and the program of the earlier naturalism. If he did not see life whole, he saw very clearly such sections of life as he chose to observe. If he handled only the horrible and the painful, he handled them with tremendous power.

The portrayal of character is Verga's forte. His keen eye, his unfaltering decision, his trained and trenchant pen project upon the lurid background of his plays unforgettable dark and menacing figures scorched into our consciousness, — Rembrandtesque figures touched with sparse high lights, darkening into dense shadows.

The creator of these persons has entered into their lives, has adopted their speech, thought their thoughts, been harrowed by their superstitions, has become, for the nonce, the person he is presenting. That is Verga's psycho-imaginative grasp on his characters. But he was not a psychological thinker like Giacosa; there is no mental development in the case of any of his persons, they are static and we leave them at the same point emotionally and intellectually at which we found them — one of the reasons why Verga is best in short plays.

Truth was his motto and his watchword, and he felt with Sainte-Beuve that if the True were present then the Good and the Beautiful might come off as best they could; so he cared not for inspiration or for homiletics. He studied and presented only the disagreeable side of

nature, but that is largely because he possessed so deep a sense of the tragedy of the humble. "He has the sense of the love that kills with its intensity, of fatality, of death. These dull-witted peasants are in the grasp of a power greater than themselves, they are but pawns in the terrible game of life, condemned by destiny to unhappiness, controlled by their desires and lusts, the submerged, The Vanquished."

These words of Monello, making only a slight reservation, may be taken as placing Verga in his proper niche in the gallery of literary history: "Verga did not open the sea like Moses to allow a whole people to pass; he opened a road bathed in brilliant sunlight through the Italian theatre, and sent over it only a few living people. But after *Rustic Chivalry*, it will not be possible to close that road again. The contemporary drama must from now on traverse it." So far as it pays tribute to Verga as a "road-breaking" influence and as the never-to-be neglected exponent of reality, Monello's verdict is authoritative. But Monello did not foresee D'Annunzio and Sem Benelli.

Certain aspects of Verism were behind the revival of popular drama in Naples which is associated with the names of Salvatore di Giacomo, and Goffredo Cognetti, his collaborator in several plays. A discussion of these playwrights and their plays has its proper place in another chapter, but a word needs to be said here to connect them legitimately with Verga and Capuana.

The ideal of the Neapolitans was to create a local drama by presenting on the stage faithful reproductions of the life — activities, persons, feelings — of contemporary Naples, — the Camorra, the lottery, the café; the people

of the streets — the crab-meat vendor, the money-changer, the scolding woman — all as they lived and spoke. But here, in this objective presentation, the Neapolitans rested; they were no theorizers, they cared not at all for the impassibility of the artist, the simplification of the action, the denudation of the dialogue, the other Verist principles which Verga observed.

It is worthy of remark that Italian Verism is almost entirely the product of South Italy and, if not classical, is certainly anti-Romantic, as witness its simplicity, its search for truth, its insistence upon the merely human aspect of its art. Concerning these distinctions, Karl Vossler, in his *Italienische Literatur der Gegenwart*, says, "The program of verism, which demanded an impersonal, cold, learned art, is better suited to the South Italians — the Sicilians, the Abruzzese, the Neapolitans, and the Romans — than to the Lombards and Piedmontese; and their spiritual and fantastic temperaments, to which Romanticism is a poison, have here found an antidote."

Gerolamo Rovetta (1853–1910) must be mentioned, being the author of twenty-five or thirty plays, some ten of which are worthy to be considered in a historical or critical study. Indeed, one of them, *Romanticism*, may be said to rival Giacosa's *As the Leaves* in theatrical popularity. Its present vogue in Italy, twenty years after its first production, is astonishing. As a matter of fact this play lies quite outside Rovetta's natural vein, his talent being not at all for melodrama and the historical drama, but for the prose piece of ordinary contemporary life.

Though he has to his credit several successful plays, Rovetta cannot be called a playwright of the first rank.

He is too facile; he is too pessimistic — not tragically, after the manner of the great pessimists — but ironically and sarcastically pessimistic; in matters of technic he is guilty of ill-digested plots, muddy action, vague characterizations. His saving qualities are ready shorthand conventional psychology that explains his action, a keen eye for a good situation, and some genuine skill in depicting his chosen *milieux*.

Gerolamo Rovetta was born of a fine old family of wealth and position, and grew up in the tradition of the leisure class into a gilded youth, idling away his time in the theatre and in amorous intrigues. Consequently he knew at first hand certain aspects of the contemporary life of fashion among the young aristocracy. He had good stuff in him and refused to be contented with the ordinary existence of his class. He adopted the theatre as a profession and stuck to it in a professional way.

It is said that his first play came into being as a result of mere pique. He was courting a fashionable actress, and went with her to view the first performance of a play by one of his rivals. The young Rovetta set out to ruin the performance, making inopportune and derisive remarks, laughing in the serious places, and in general behaving so scandalously that at last his companion could bear it no longer and turned upon him in anger. "At least your friend has written a play," she cried; "as for you! You are good for nothing except to knot your cravat." She had made a palpable hit. "Very well," Rovetta replied, "this fellow has written a play in two acts. I'll write one also, in four acts, and instantly. You shall see." He could better the quantity if not the quality! True to his word he soon appeared

with the four-act drama. After several failures, he wrote his first success, *In the City of Rome* (*Alla città di Roma*) (1887). It is not a very good play, and the public was no more indulgent to Rovetta than he had been to his rival. He was looked upon as an amateur, not to be taken seriously, a mere dabbler in dramatics. But his critics were wrong; he had found his calling and was not to be discouraged by criticisms or ridicule.

Rovetta's first genuinely good play in the opinion of most critics was *Dorina's Trilogy*, which, though it was too satiric and bitter to hold the boards long, had an immense *succès d'estime* and wide influence in promoting the realistic drama then coming into vogue. *Dorina's Trilogy* (*La Trilogia di Dorina*) (1887) reveals Rovetta's qualities and defects as realistic dramatist. It displays his expert handling of *milieux* and exposes his cardboard superficiality of characterization. In essence, it is the representation of three *milieux*, three classes of modern society, — the aristocratic, the wretched, and the equivocal. It follows the career of a young girl of humble origin, first as governess in a noble family, then in the process of surrendering her honor, and finally, utterly depraved, as the cruel, cold, and scheming adventuress. Rovetta has made the most of his material in showing Dorina's successive surroundings, but has completely failed to follow her inner and spiritual disintegration. A disagreeable play, *Dorina's Trilogy* has about it the fascination of an intense Zolaesque reality.

A much better play from the point of view of dramatic construction and psychological development is *The Dishonest Men* (*I Disonesti*) (1892). Here is expounded a favorite doctrine of Rovetta's, a doctrine reaffirmed in

many other recent plays, notably in John Galsworthy's *Justice*, — that circumstances, not principles, decide conduct and make good and bad men. As to Tolstoi and Dostoievski, to Rovetta the criminal is not blameworthy, he is only unfortunate. Crime reduces itself to disease, physical or moral; as one of the characters in this play exclaims, "One is not born dishonest."

Still another study of contemporary life, the tragedy *Reality* (*La Realtà*) (1895), presents the same faults and merits as *The Dishonest Men*. Rovetta puts the socialists and revolutionaries on the witness stand and subjects them to a searching interrogatory. Revolutions, he feels, trouble only the surface of society, change only the external appearances of government, but never touch the great stagnant depths of humanity which remain forever the same. The idealist is the only one who reaps the consequences of his upheaval, and a bitter crop it is. The great inanimate body of the race remains always the same, actuated by the same lusts, none the less ugly in moments of social idealism than in times of stagnation. Humanity is everywhere cowardly and base is the moral to be drawn from this disagreeable play.

Others of Rovetta's numerous realistic plays are *The Hubbub* (*La Baraonda*) (1894), which contains the sinister figure of Matteo Cantasirena, professor, advocate, knight and even colonel, the *arriviste* who will stop at nothing to gain his ends; *The Olive Branch* (*Il Ramo d'Ulivo*) (1899), and finally *Papà Eccellenza* (1906), a fine character study, one of Rovetta's few good ones. The good old man sacrifices everything, his fortune, his name, his reputation, to an unworthy and ungrateful daughter. The title rôle is a favorite one with the great actor Novelli.

While his best work was done in the drama of contemporary life, Rovetta tried his hand as most of his contemporaries at the historical play; indeed he achieved his greatest single success here with *Romanticism*. Those that stand out are *Beginning of the Century* (*Principio di Secolo*) (1896), *Romanticism* (*Romanticismo*) (1901), *The Buffoon King* (*Il re burlone*) (1905) and *Molière and his Wife* (*Molière e la sua moglie*) (1909). These are of various degress of merit but on the whole are less notable than those produced in the other manner. As soon as Rovetta gets off of his firm ground, as soon as he enters *milieux* he is not accurately acquainted with, he falls back on his knowledge of dramatic technic and produces plays like those of Sardou and Scribe, dependent for their appeal not on truth but on the well-known tricks of the dramatic prestidigitators, making the restless and hectic appeal of situation, suspense and surprise. Indeed Rovetta has been called "Le Sardou Italien" in acknowledgment of his savant construction and his succulent dialogue.

The Italian success of *Romanticism* was equaled by that of no other contemporary play except Giacosa's *As the Leaves*. Like the history plays of Marenco in the sixties, it appealed to a certain Chauvinism and made a telling plea to the deep hatred for the Austrians which lived on in Italy. It flattered the civic sensibilities of his compatriots. Furthermore, Rovetta was undergoing a reaction against his own earlier pessimism toward a nobler idealism — against "*la plate réalité*" towards a truth that embodied a great idea. He wrote an article in the *Rassegna Nazionale* in which occurs this passage: "The historical drama is not reborn through a love of

history itself, but because of an idealistic reaction . . . truth has fallen to-day into too vulgar a verity, and the public wants . . . a truth enveloped in a certain idealism. It has had enough in the theatre of these platitudes added to those it encounters in everyday life."

This famous drama is a presentation of an early incident of the Italian war of liberation. The Count Lambertini, young, noble, an aristocrat every inch, joins the conspiracy of the bourgeois against the Austrians. (The scene in which he pronounces the oath of allegiance to the Italian cause is in the really grand manner.) We follow him through three acts of intrigue until his apprehension by the enemy. A secondary interest is his falling in love with his wife; theirs had been purely a marriage of convenience, but now in his trouble, he finds in her a stanch ally of the Cause and a faithful loving companion.

The mechanism of *Romanticism* creaks rather badly at times, Rovetta is very prodigal of his material, the plot is disconnected and the characterization conventional, but it lives by virtue of effective situations, many lively speeches and an atmosphere of fiery patriotism. It is good melodrama and at the same time is an authentic picture of the mind of Italy in the fifties — its aspirations toward freedom and unity — a state of mind contemptuously called by the Austrian oppressors "Romanticism." The play appeared, too, when people were hungering for just such material; its appeal was deepened by the fact that the memory of the events it reflected was still fresh in the minds of many a spectator. In a sense, indeed, the whole contemporary Italian audience took part in the action of *Romanticism*, reliving experiences and emotions through which they had but lately passed.

The Buffoon King, another history, deals with this same epoch, so fascinating and so important to modern Italy. *Molière and his Wife* shows the unhappy marital venture of the great French comedian and his Armande. All these historical plays exhibit those qualities and the defects that have been studied in some detail in *Romanticism*.

His crowning and distinctive ability was his power in presenting social life — the persons and the surroundings — and he is convincing only when he is using material gathered at first hand. Therefore he will ultimately be admired for *The Trilogy of Dorina* rather than for *Romanticism*.

Rovetta's best gift and his best achievement was the painting of *milieux*. Here he produced marvelous illusions. His weakest point was his failure to grasp the humanity of his persons — to portray them in the round; only once does he record a deep and ennobling passion, — that of fatherhood, in *Papà Eccellenza*. And the morality both reflected and adumbrated in all the plays is the familiar society morality of "What will people say?" When one encounters again and again this utilitarian and opportunist morality, he is impelled to ask, "Is it possible that this is a contemporary of Henrik Ibsen?"

But he has one supreme merit: he can write a good play, swift-moving, compact, full of tense situations. M. Muret's praise of him is possibly too generous but it is only fair to quote it: "M. Rovetta gives to a nicety the illusion of life. His people love and hate, enjoy and suffer with an intensity which communicates itself to the spectator. Their destinies may be vulgar; they are not indifferent or tiresome. You hate the villains,

you pity the beautiful and gentle victims. M. Rovetta interests us, diverts us, moves us."

There are on the Italian dramatic roster the names of two women whose work falls in the nineties and belongs in the earlier realism, — Signore Amalia Rosselli and Teresa Ubertis, the latter better known by her pen name of Teresah.

Mme. Rosselli sprang suddenly into fame when in 1898 her play *The Soul* (*Anima*) won first prize in the great national competition. Married to a wealthy husband, Madame Rosselli has cultivated her dramatic gifts unprofessionally, almost secretly — to what good purpose is revealed by a study of *The Soul.* She has written one other play, *Illusion* (*Illusione*) (1901), not so successful as the first, but possessing genuine merit. The problem of this second play is a harrowing one — Can a man forgive his wife who has been unfaithful to him, even when he desires to forgive her, and her unfaithfulness is not voluntary? Emma, innocent herself, has been betrayed and seduced; her husband tries to forgive, but his efforts are so fruitless that Emma, though she hates her seducer, cannot endure the tortures her husband inflicts upon her in the process of forgetting and forgiving; and she finally revolts and leaves him.

The Soul might have been written by Björnsen or Ibsen, so logical and clear is its thinking, so opposed its ethical principles to the typical Latin prejudices. Olga, a striking young girl, lives an artist's life in Rome, one of a group of emancipated thinkers. In her studio gather the radicals of all shades. Olga herself is in constant and violent rebellion against the obscurities, the prejudices, the conventional lies of the world. Above all, the education

of young girls is the object of her bitter ridicule. She is angered by the indecent care taken to hide from girls the mysteries of sex life, an obscurantism which results all too often in awakening evil curiosities, in producing perversions. Olga is courted by a young man of the world, Silvio; to him she confesses that she had been violated by a brute when she was quite a young girl. She tells of her horror and despair. How little by little, however, she had recovered. She had reasoned with herself, "Poor girl, haven't you a *soul* left to you? A soul which is virgin? A second virginity which is still yours? And then I thought of the man who should possess it some day, this spotless soul, who should inscribe his name upon it." Silvio is this man. But he is a conventional and cowardly thing who cannot comprehend this virginity of the soul. He casts Olga off, to marry a snip of a woman who though physically maiden is, as Olga puts it, "a cocotte in soul." He regrets too late his irreparable error of choice.

Teresah, better known for her novels, wrote in 1902 *The Judge* (*Il Giudice*), which deserves a place in any repertory. The title rôle is that of the honorable and upright Marco Stairini, the model judge. The rich man of the community in a lawsuit against a neighbor tries to influence the judge, but fails. However, at the trial it seems that the rich man is in the right, and Stairini gives a decision in his favor. Immediately fortune smiles upon him, favors come his way. The rich man's son marries his daughter. His neighbors are not slow in voicing their suspicions that he has been bribed. At last he himself begins to wonder if indeed he had been influenced in his decision. "They cried to my face that I had sold myself

— But it's not true. It's not true!" The play is very Italian, very human, a wonderful psychological study.

Other plays of Teresah's are *On the Goerner* (*Sul Goerner*) (1902) and *Red Bread* (*Il Pane rosso*) (1903), *The Other Bank* (*L'Altra riva*) (1907); *Happiness* (*La Felicità*) and *Not to die* (*Per non morire*) (1910).

Marco Praga (1862–), the other realist of the period who must be put beside Rovetta, has been called the Italian Paul Hervieu, and it is true that he has some things in common with his French contemporary. He has the same logical, almost geometrical, certainty of mind, the same tendency to create abstractions, the same cold and critical point of view, the same lack of power to create human interest in his characters. Hervieu has, however, a moral slant totally missing in Praga. The Frenchman has constantly a concern for the good of the race. But Praga goes Flaubert one better in his famous dictum of "art for art's sake", and formulates a doctrine of "the theatre for the theatre's sake." He reacted even more violently than did Rovetta against the didacticism of Giacosa and his group.

Marco Praga was born at Milan in 1862 of cultured and sympathetic parents. His father, one of the minor romantic poets, overcome with *Weltschmerz*, felt that society was persecuting him. He was bitter and satiric in his attacks upon the prejudices and what he esteemed the moral hypocrisy of his world. No doubt the young Marco imbibed from the atmosphere of his father's house some of his own hatred of accepted standards. But he imbibed also other and better things, — a devotion to art, a respect for literature, and a love of it which enabled him to sacrifice the relative certainty of a good

living as a bank clerk in favor of the precarious career of a writer of plays.

Praga's devotion to his chosen calling sustained him through the well-nigh complete failure of his first play, *The Two Houses* (*Le due case*) (1887), written in collaboration with Virgilio Colombo, and fortified him in the production of *The Friend* (*L'Amico*) (1888), a play in one act which enjoyed a considerable run. This promising little play shows qualities which clearly prophesy Praga's subsequent performance. The plot is simplicity itself: a woman tries to recover certain letters she had written to a lover now dead, but her husband forestalls her in the possession of them, and discovers her faithlessness; so far it sounds a bit conventional, but Praga adds a distinctive touch. The husband does not murder her in the old romantic way; he does not blast her with thunderous denunciations; he does the ordinary bourgeois thing. He says, "You low creature, suppose I were to kill you! But I shall not. Get out! I shall not kill you. I shall not do anything to you. Leave!" Conciseness and directness such as this are constant elements of Praga's strength.

Like Verga, he exemplifies the naturalistic principle of the impassibility of the artist. Praga may even be called the most pitiless of artists. He seems to have schooled himself to complete indifference as to the emotional experiences of his characters; so he never calls on his audience for sympathy or appreciation. However, as he goes on, he develops a certain cynical and almost ferocious irony, which contradicts his theoretical impassibility. He acquires and nourishes a desolate conception of existence. He denies the actuality of a good

motive; he avers, in effect, that there is no virtue, no faithfulness, no purity. Under the plea that he presents mere truth, he debases all sentiment, drags all ideals in the mud, suppresses all generous impulses, clips all wings. He is the very type of the disillusioned intellectual and cynical *viveur*.

The three plays that followed *The Friend* were not successful; they were *Giuliana*, *The Spell* (*L'Incanto*) and *Mater Dolorosa*. But in 1889 with *The Virgins* (*I Vergini*) Praga more than fulfilled the expectations of his admirers and the promise of the first two plays. This was followed in 1891 by *The Ideal Wife* (*La Moglie Ideale*), another successful play. Immediately after this there occurred a change in Praga which forces us to divide his work into two distinct periods and almost into two distinct kinds.

Between *The Ideal Wife* and his next play, in the short while between 1891 and 1893, Praga experienced an artistic degeneration and disillusionment. He began to seek popularity, writing for success regardless of art. In 1889 Praga wrote of *The Virgins*, "I am not in doubt about my work. . . . I am assured as to the artistic value of my play. I have tried to produce something true, something human."

The creed reflected in this youthful utterance may be contrasted with that voiced by the protagonist of his short story *The Rehearsal*, a theatrical director, fairly to be taken as Praga's mouthpiece. He is giving advice to a young playwright of the "symbolico-mystico-philosophic school; and he points out that the practical exigencies of the theatre in Italy demand the sacrifice of art to success. "Oh, these young people," he says;

"they have ideas in abundance and they want to express them all. But no! the dramatic author must impose sacrifices on the thinker."

The Virgins (*I Virgini*) (1889) brought fame and material success to its youthful author. *The Virgins* of the title, called a few years later by Marcel Prévost *Les Demi-Vierges*, are young women who are ready to sell their charms to the highest bidder. They are neither virgins nor yet abandoned creatures, — their status is ambiguous, their virtue equivocal. They are rather typical denizens of the *demi-monde*. A certain Mme. Delfina Tossi, a widow, has three marriageable daughters, but they are "people one doesn't marry", as one of the characters expresses it. Their house is a resort for all the roués of the city, who pay shameless court to the two shameless younger sisters, but who are rebuffed by the elder, Paolina, a morose silent girl, who appears in the house but cannot take part in its activities. She has a real lover (in the Anglo-Saxon sense), a certain young Dario who adores her. Paolina returns his affection, but is tortured by a terrible secret, a remorse. His asking her hand in marriage wrings from her the terrible truth. She loves him and wants to be his wife but feels, honest as she is, that she must tell him she had been the mistress of an old friend of the family, sold to him when a mere girl in an infamous bargain. She has always felt a horrible revulsion and terror of the deed. But Dario cannot stand the test; he is cowardly and weak and he flees from her presence. The next day he returns, but only to propose a disgraceful and sordid liaison, — they will not be married but will flee together to some remote spot. Paolina repudiates the plan with all her soul. At every moment

she rises in moral grandeur as her lover descends, until at last Dario flees the house and the temptation to make an offer of marriage to her. Logical to the end, Praga diminishes not one jot the terrific force of prejudice which extorts the sacrifice of love, honor, and intelligence.

Praga's own favorite among his plays was *The Ideal Wife* (*La Moglie Ideale*) (1890). Here he has approached nearest, he thinks, to fulfilling his ideal of dramatic art. Here, with that impassibility which was the first canon of his creed, holding no brief for or against society, creating as he believed a play for its own sake, he has put in ironic comparison the baseness of man and the criminality of woman.

The Ideal Wife is Giulia Campiani, "who, having a lover, remains a good wife, respectful and affectionate to her husband; who evades scandals and the unhappiness of her children and keeps peace in her home, not a patched-up peace, a peace of convention, but real contentment." She succeeds in belonging to two men at the same time, — to her lover with her heart, to her husband with her self. But her lover grows weary of her, wishing to marry and settle down. At first she is passionate, resentful, combative but becomes resigned to her fate. The play is one piece of pitiless irony — the very title even — and scenes like the first of the play are "inspired" clearly by Becque and his famous opening passage of *La Parisienne*. Giulia is sending off her husband and little boy with every expression of tenderness and love. She is all solicitude. A friend of the family, a young man, watches this domestic scene. No sooner is the door closed than, turning with a little amorous cry, she throws herself into the arms of the young man, her lover. The

last scene of all, in which Giulia, taking the arm of the man, still the "family friend", to go out to dinner, says in his ear, "Don't leave me too quickly, for Andrea (her husband) could not explain your conduct", echoes and reaffirms the ironic cynicism of the first scene.

In *The Virgins* and *The Ideal Wife* Praga had uttered his message and made his distinctive contribution; from now on he is revamping material, developing, perhaps, in psychological detail but at the sacrifice of more precious qualities. *The Enamoured Woman* (*L'Innamorata*) (1892), *Alleluja* (1893), *The Heir* (*L'Erede*) (1894), *The Grandmother* (*La Nonna*) (1892) and *The Handsome Apollo* (*Il Bel'Apollo*) (1894) do not contribute much to our knowledge of Praga. *The Enamoured Woman* was written to give Eleonora Duse a good part. It is a study of a woman's love which endures to the grave and even beyond it.

Alleluja is a better play. It is a study of heredity. A woman has been caught in adultery, but to spare their daughter her husband (called *Alleluja* from his *bonhommie* and cheerful manner) consents to pardon and forget. The daughter, growing up, marries the man of her choice and has a lovely child. But the taint is in her blood; from pure caprice she takes a lover. Her father finds this out, and discovering in her the failure of his own remedy, forgiveness, brings her to justice. Praga carries to an absurd extreme the then newly popular doctrine of heredity.

The years from *The Heir* to *Handsome Apollo* constitute a period of comparative mediocrity of thought though fecund in effective plays. In *The Heir* a dissipated nobleman violates a young girl, the daughter of a governess

in his house. His son repairs his father's crime by marrying the innocent victim. *Handsome Apollo* is a study of a modern Don Juan in contemporary society, much the same sort of thing that Sabatino Lopez did in his *The Beast and the Beauties.*

The Moral of the Fable (*La Morale della favola*) is in some ways the converse of *The Ideal Wife.* In a moment of erotic excitement Lucia has given herself to a man. But this no sooner done than she feels a horrible revulsion of mind and body. Her remorse will not let her return to her husband and her home. She tries to take refuge with her paramour, but he has discovered that he does not love her. She wants to be honest, but at last, for the sake of her husband and children, she is forced to silence her conscience and take up again the round of domestic life.

The Doubt (*Il Dubito*) (1895) is one of Praga's searching psychological studies. A man is engaged to a young girl, but is tortured with a terrible doubt. Will his love last beyond the satisfaction of his physical desire? He hesitates and questions himself and her until when at last he decides that he truly loves her he has lost her.

In *Ondina* (*L' Ondina*) (1904) Praga revamps another old problem: Can a man marry a woman with a suspected past even though he knows she is pure? Praga's answer is No! The suspicions of society added to the husband's jealousies will certainly ruin the venture. *L'Ondina* might well be the sequel to *The Virgins.* The man's greatest rival is his wife's own past.

The Crisis (*La Crisi*) (1904) is the presentation of a singular type of woman who really belongs to her husband, loved by him and loving him, all the time, but who can be wholly his only after *The Crisis* when she has com-

mitted adultery and confessed it to him. The play is concerned with the consequent readjustments. Praga has written one other play since *The Crisis, The Closed Door* (*La Porta chiusa*) (1913).

Praga's limitation is that his process of selection was narrowed and darkened by an intellectual dyspepsia. He saw nature only as "the hog", activity as crime. The drama is made up of human situations and the only human situation Praga seemed to be interested in presenting was one that included adultery. There is no relief from this lurid crime. With deadly recurrence these corrupt and misguided women meet us. The men are either the dupes of their wives or partners in their disgrace. What kind of people could these have been and what kind of world was it he knew! But his pessimism and irony extend to all human relationships. His motto apparently is "*à quoi bon?*"

Other qualities characteristic of his later work are the violence of his emotions, and the theatricality of his situations. In *The Enamoured Woman* and *The Heir*, he outdoes the Grand Guignol in situations of horror, hate and passion, jealousy and remorse. Like Dumas *fils*, as he grew older and the fountain of his artistic inspiration ran low, Praga resorted more and more to tricks to make his effects, violent contrasts of souls, crude antitheses of situations which could scarcely fail to offend good taste.

Though he has had the wide social experience of a man of the world and must have come into close contact with real men and women, Praga's lack of sympathy prevented his understanding them. The people of his dramas are not human because they lack that essential vitality which

can be supplied only by sympathy. His studies of women particularly, while they are keen, are curiously geometrical. *The Ideal Wife*, Paolina of *The Virgins*, Eugenia of *The Enamoured Woman* lay bare their souls to us as under the scalpel, but they lack femininity, sympathy, humanity. His scepticism made Praga's talent sterile. He never carries his readers or his spectators with him as a more virile and abounding talent would. He convinces but does not move or inspire.

In his earlier works Marco Praga concerned himself mainly with truth. *The Virgins* and *The Ideal Wife* are worthy to stand with Verga's peasant plays as the most perfect dramatic expressions of Verism; and these are the two plays that may hope to endure. It was a grave misfortune that later, in attempting to combine truth and effectiveness, he leaned too much toward the latter. It was his great fault to have taken too narrow a view of the function of art, his great merit to possess a keen intelligence and a mastery of theatrical technic.

CHAPTER IV

Gabriele D'Annunzio

Poet, romancer, dramatist, orator, archæologist, politician and aviator, Gabriele D'Annunzio is at one and the same time the most and the least Italian of artists. In his æsthetic outlook, in his preoccupation with the past, in his intellectual and emotional reaction to stimuli, in the very nature of the stimuli to which he reacts, he is true Italian; in his lack of humor, his steady melancholy deepening into pessimism, his contempt for "*la gran bestia trionfante*", the people, he exhibits a temperament quite unlike that of his typical fellow-Italians.

So settled is his melancholy, so pervasive his pessimism, that they give color and tone to all he says; they both constitute the first impression one gets of him, and linger longest in our memory of him. One says, "Here is an artist to whom faith, hope, charity,—all the affirmative virtues are meaningless terms." Nor does he seem to have substituted for them, as did Nietzsche, a philosophy of virility and purposeful activity. D'Annunzio's strenuosity, his worship of power, his admiration of cruelty are not the headlong plunge of the indomitable superman, but rather the passionate, futile revolt of a weak man who hates his own weakness. In many other ways D'Annunzio fails to represent Italy,— modern living Italy,— and this in spite of the fact that he has taken part in many national

activities; in spite of his picturesque dramatic rôle in kindling and nourishing the war spirit in Italy; in spite of his open adherence to the philosophy of *Machtpolitik;* in spite, too, of his short career in politics during which he tried all varieties, going over from extreme conservatism to extreme radicalism, only to rebound later as a reactionary. He embodies the dead and dying past of his nation, not its present, — economic, humanitarian, scientific, materialistic. His face is turned, not toward the dawn of democracy, of social and political equality, economic development and international community, but backward toward the sunset of medieval Rome and the gorgeous pageant of the Renaissance. Nowhere does he strike a note that might not have been struck by Dante.

This tendency — one may well call it a limitation — helps to explain the fact that his plays have not met with a success at all comparable to that of his poetry and his novels. The drama appeals to a large and promiscuous public and succeeds when it presents living issues and living situations in a living way; novel and poetry, however, may make their appeal to a chosen circle capable of appreciating the charm of rare and distant beauty, of æsthetic and esoteric emotion. It is in the presentation of such beauty and such emotions that D'Annunzio excels. We must be quite aware, then, that in studying him as a dramatist we are approaching him on his least attractive and least successful literary side.

His genius is poetic and descriptive. "His introspective habit of mind and lack of wide human sympathy, his genius which interprets suffering rather than doing, unfit him for grasping a dramatic action and developing it clearly and inevitably before the spectator." He often

resorts to the expedient of describing the action in stage directions instead of bringing it into the dialogue or the gesture; frequently the crucial and climactic deed of a drama takes place off stage, as in *La Gioconda*, in *Fedra* and *The Dream of an Autumn Sunset*.

But under the spell of D'Annunzio's magic eloquence these blemishes seem unimportant. One abrogates his critical judgment and finds himself carried away by the splendor and pageantry of *Francesca da Rimini*, *The Daughter of Jorio*, or *The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian*, borne along on a swelling flood of magnificent passionate language. D'Annunzio's pictorial imagination is as marvelous as his mastery of words, creating in each scene a stage picture of unparalleled beauty. He has, also, both a profound and microscopic insight into certain kinds of souls; he is an expert and subtle analyst of the erotic emotions. With all his faults as a dramatist, he is by virtue of these gifts, which are not essentially dramatic, the outstanding figure of the Italian stage to-day.

Gabriele D'Annunzio, whose real name is said to be Rapagnetta, was born in 1864 on board the yacht *Irene*, lying on the blue bosom of the Adriatic not far from Pescara; and in a curious if not mystic way he has kept through his whole life a love for the sea, which seems at times to breathe a cooling, cleansing breath through the fetid, hectic and violent atmosphere of his plays. One play, *The Ship*, may be called in essence a glorification of the beloved Adriatic. While his ancestry is clouded in a becoming mystery, it is rumored that he is a Hungarian Jew, — and some biographers speak of his "Dalmatian" origin. He spent his childhood with his parents at Ferra-

villa al Mare in Abruzzi and then, in 1878, was sent to school at Prato, in Tuscany. Here in the little *collegio* he received his early education. The child Gabriele had shown a marked inclination and talent for the arts and was taught painting, his models and inspiration being mainly the pre-Raphaelites, — Fra Filippo Lippi, Botticelli, and above all Giotto. In this early training he laid the foundation of that curious and exact knowledge of archæology and of many crafts which appears so conspicuously in his work.

On a memorable day in 1879 while he was still a student at Prato, a volume of Carducci, the "*Odi Barbari*", fell into his hands. The next day he was a poet. Carducci became his authority and his model, and to him he owes his careful study of words, his care for style, his dignity of manner which never falls into colloquialism. From that day D'Annunzio has never ceased to cultivate his style with careful perseverance. He has fed himself on the great Italian classics, in particular on Guido Cavalcanti, Cino da Pistoja, Dante, — a nurture which has given him a slightly archaic flavor. His vocabulary is so erudite and so enormous that it has been necessary to publish a D'Annunzio dictionary, a work of two volumes. His style — the union of this marvelous vocabulary with an unfailing sense of the music of speech and with a never-ceasing flow of new, beautiful, and terrible images — is his chief glory.

The first result of his Carduccian enthusiasm was a volume of verse, *Primo Vere*, which was hailed with delight by the critics and which raised the youthful author to fame in a day. The book was the herald of D'Annunzio's amazing literary achievement; volume after volume

has followed, at least one every year. In 1860 he went to Rome and began his literary career professionally as one of the staff of the ultra-modern *Cronica Bizantina*. Here he came into contact with many of the artists who were or were destined to be the masters of his generation — in especial Matilda Serao and Giovanni Pascoli; as he became more widely known in the literary world he was welcomed into the fashionable society of the gay capital. Women attracted him and were attracted by him, so that amour after amour came his way, giving him the experience and the opportunity for observation that equipped him as a specialist in the erotic emotions. He seems to have given himself entirely to the pleasure of the senses and the appetites, stimulating sensation with sensation until the inevitable result followed, and as always, mere pleasure turned to dust and ashes on his tongue. At this epoch he worked out his doctrine of purification through pleasure. Pleasure it is that develops character, and the supreme man is the one who has experienced all the pleasures in their greatest intensity. Anything is therefore justifiable in the pursuit of this *summum bonum* since it is by the gratification of desire that man progresses. Andrea Sperelli, the hero of D'Annunzio's first novel, *Pleasure*, which appeared at this time, is indubitably in many aspects a portrait of the artist himself. It shows him as possessed of and by an overdeveloped sexual sense. His deliberate and, as it were, theoretical gratification of desire led to the semi-sadistic attitude of Andrea Sperelli, who loves one mistress in the person of another. This strain of abnormal desire and its justification runs deep through all his books and plays. The changes are rung on almost every aspect of the sex instinct. Desire furnishes the

motivation and constitutes the subject-matter of nearly every play — practically always abnormal as well as excessive, taking the form of incest in *Fedra* and *The Dead City*, of adultery in *Francesca da Rimini* or *La Gioconda* or at times of mere lust, always exigent, brutal, often perverted.

At this time also, that is during the early years of his residence in Rome, D'Annunzio developed and broadened his interest in the arts. He became passionately interested in the minor arts, pottery, wood-carving, goldsmith's work, terra-cotta. His warmth of description of fine furniture, of classical buildings, of beautiful fabrics, could come only from personal contact and loving appreciation. His interest in these *realien* becomes later important in his handling of staging and setting; each precious object takes on added significance when it takes its place in a drama.

In some mysterious way — mysterious when one considers his other occupations — D'Annunzio acquired at the same time an intimate knowledge of the classics. He has the mystical sixth sense for antiquity so that it is to him an open book. Greece more than Rome attracted him, and he mastered the life of classic and Mycenæan Greece, both as an archæologist and a psychologist. History, too, particularly Italian history, he knows to the bottom. This is one of the secrets of D'Annunzio's powerful appeal to Italians, an appeal almost lost to foreigners: he is able to strike all the chords of national sentiment because he knows the national past.

Life to D'Annunzio the artist is a purely hedonistic matter; he is concerned only with beauty. To him beauty is the only religion; the creation and enjoyment of

it the only aim of life. His characteristic perversion of the philosophy of Nietzsche asserts that the aim of the life-struggle is to create, not the perfect man, the Superman, but the perfect work of art, — the Super-work-of-art.

His military service in 1890 saved him from going to pieces mentally and physically, for it took him out of the indulgent, corrupt circle in which he had been living, forced him into the open air, and did something toward giving him a sound physique and steady nerves. On the basis of his new-found strength he set to work again to write novels, humanitarian in phraseology and intent. As a matter of fact he had been reading Tolstoi and Dostoievski, and their great-souled pity had gone to his head. But while he caught the lingo and the external appeal to the intellect, he failed to create the wonderful ensemble of these great psychologists. He has not the deep and hospitable humanity which makes the Russian masters one with their fellow beings; on the contrary, D'Annunzio is the quintessence of individualism, a dweller, like Alfred de Vigny, in his ivory tower.

Something has been said above of D'Annunzio's admiration for Nietzsche and of the German's profound influence upon him. The paganism, the satiric quality, the negation of human responsibility, the pseudo-intellectual doctrines of *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, *The Genealogy of Morals*, and *The Twilight of the Idols*, but above all the individualistic irresponsibility of the superman were calculated in the highest degree to appeal to D'Annunzio. They were the complete and triumphant justification of his own instincts; they satisfied his intense egotism and at the same time justified him in his interpretation of the life of the world. After he came to know Nietzsche, all his

heroes are Supermen, devoting their lives to the fulfillment of their own destinies and desires. In *L'Innocente,* in *Le Vergini della Rocce,* in *Il Fuoco,* and in the plays — he began about this time to write plays — the Super-hero appears. In *The Dead City* the heroes are supermen in the field of art, as also in *La Gioconda;* in *Glory,* it is the superman in politics; in *The Ship* and *More Than Love,* the hero is justified in fulfilling his destiny regardless of consequences. These heroes strive for two things; to satisfy their fleshly lusts and to produce the perfect being (as in *The Virgins of the Rocks*), or to create the perfect work of art.

D'Annunzio opened his dramatic career with the publication of several *saynètes* which must have been intended as closet drama rather than for the boards. The first three are one-act "*parabole*" upon subjects drawn from the New Testament. In 1897, *The Parable of the Foolish Virgins and the Wise Virgins* (*La parabola delle vergini fatue e delle Vergini prudente*) appeared in the great periodical *La Nuova Antologia.* In 1898 *The Parable of the Rich Man and Poor Lazarus* (*La parabola del' uom ricco e dell povero Lazaro*), the best of these Biblical plays, and in the same year *The Parable of the Prodigal Son* (*La parabola del figlio prodigo*), both came out in the *Mattino di Napoli.* D'Annunzio was in no sense qualified to treat these themes with the simplicity, the austerity, the sincerity which constitutes them in the Biblical form masterpieces of narrative and triumphs of symbolism. They became in his hands Byzantine, decadent, perverted; he transfuses them with a sort of Correggio atmosphere, sensuous, half-concealing, half-revealing their outlines and their meaning. Many years later, in *The Martyrdom*

of Saint Sebastian, he treats certain aspects of Christian mythology in the same elusive and illusory vein. In *The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins*, D'Annunzio inverts the moral, defending and justifying those who know how to enjoy the pleasures in hand with no thought for the future; the same perverted application is made in *The Parable of the Rich Man and Poor Lazarus*. The rich man, from Hell, invites Lazarus, in Heaven, to envy him. "Look," he cries, "my eyes have seen all these things, my ears have heard them, my tongue has tasted them, my nostrils have scented them, my hands have touched them, all my flesh has joyed in them. I have lived my life to the full. Envy me!"

More characteristic, however, are the *Dreams of the Seasons* (*I sogni delle Stagioni*); *The Dream of a Spring Morning* (*Il sogno d'un mattino di primavera*) (1897) and *The Dream of an Autumn Sunset* (*Il sogno d'un tramonto d'autunno*) (1898). Here we have pure D'Annunzio. Here are the magnificent imagery, the living imagination, the adept analysis of erotic emotion, the static quality, showing itself in a lack of true dramatic action, — all the elements which characterize his dramas.

The intrigue of neither of the two *Dreams* is as important as its psychological analysis, and its atmosphere of poetic unreality. *The Dream of a Spring Morning* is, briefly, a story of the madness of a young woman whose lover has been slain in her arms; all night long she had lain, bathed in his blood, straining to her breast his frigid corpse. In the morning she was mad; her sister and friends attempt to restore her reason by showing her the dead man's brother who resembles him closely. But their efforts result only in clouding still more her disturbed mind.

With all the resources of his art, D'Annunzio enriches this pathetic theme. Henri Fouquier calls this Dream a "poem in dialogue." "I prefer," he writes, "to look upon the main personage as an abstraction, as a symbol rather than a being of flesh and blood." This view prepares one to appreciate the fitness and beauty of the lyric passages which constitute the main, almost the only excellence of the piece. D'Annunzio in making a madwoman who remains mad the center of his action, precludes psychological development; the situation remains unchanged. Action, too, is lacking; we do not witness the discovery of the lovers, or the assassination. These are faults so grave that even in the hands of Eleanora Duse the play could not hold the attention of an audience. As a poem it has wonderful lyric qualities, but even these do not offset the unrelieved monotony of the key in which it is composed.

The Dream of an Autumn Sunset, the companion "Dream", is another study of erotic passion in the same tone. The Dogaressa of Venice, Gradeniga, loves with a torment of desire a young man, for whose sake she has poisoned her husband and whom she hopes to hold by the lure of her superb maturity and her experience in amorous matters. He falls in love in his turn with the young and lovely courtesan, Pantea, adored by all the men of Venice, whose supreme beauty seems to be the very incarnation of the desirable and desired. The Dogaressa is torn by the remembrance of the pleasure she has lost; she lusts for her lover with unbearable intensity. The passages in which she celebrates her lost lover's beauty and her longing are of marvelous lyrical beauty. The Dogaressa plots Pantea's death; she calls in the most

powerful sorceresses; she makes a waxen image of the woman she hates; she utters powerful spells; and at the moment of Pantea's greatest triumph, when she appears naked on the prow of the galley *Bucentaur* on which she is journeying to delight the eyes of all Venice, the ship catches fire. But the Dogaressa's vengeance is more complete than she had planned, for it is not only the courtesan who perishes but also the youth she loves. Powerless to save him she witnesses from her balcony his death.

The Dream of an Autumn Sunset is open to the same criticism as its predecessor, — lack of dramatic construction, and a static situation. The youth and the beautiful Pantea, for example, never appear, the whole action being carried on by dialogue between the Dogaressa and her servants. The events all take place off stage, and are related by messengers; and while this gives unexampled opportunity for lyric outbursts and gorgeous narrative, it sacrifices dramatic effect as the modern stage knows it. But the description of Pantea appearing naked on the prow of the ship, the lamentation of the Dogaressa on the death of her lover, and several other passages are exquisitely done.

The Dead City (*La città morta*) (1899) is D'Annunzio's first long play and in some respects his best. He was impassioned for Greek tragedy. In *The Dead City* he proposed to revive the mode of the Greek drama, and to restate in modern idiom its message. More than once D'Annunzio has repeated this experiment, in *Fedra* and in *La Chevrefeuille*, but *The Dead City* comes nearest to fulfilling his ideal. The play is a study in morbid and criminal neurosis. It is overshadowed by a line from the *Antigone*, "Eros, unconquered in battle."

The scene of the action is the ruined Greek city of Mycenae, whither Leonardo has come on an archæological expedition. The atmosphere of the place, dry, parched, dusty, sun-baked, has penetrated to the very souls of these people. They are overwhelmed with a feeling of inevitableness; they really have no hand in their own destinies but are the tools of some higher maleficent power. In the course of his explorations Leonardo opens up a tomb more imposing than the rest, and finds himself suddenly in the presence of the corpses of the members of the house of Atreus just as they had been laid to rest after the famous banquet where all perished. There they all are clad in gold with gold masks upon their faces — Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, Cassandra, and the rest. From the dust of the old heroes is exhaled a moral miasma, and the old immemorial sin and sorrow wake and live again in the breasts of new victims. Leonardo conceives a criminal passion for his own sister, struggles against it, but feels his will and strength borne down by inexorable Fate.

The blind Anna, wife of Alessandro, is a character straight out of Maeterlinck. She is a blood-sister to Mélisande and Selysette. Her blindness has but quickened her spiritual sight, so that she alone understands the true state of things, — that Leonardo and her husband both love the girl, Bianca Maria. She plans to do away with herself to leave Alessandro free; but Leonardo, spurred on by uncontrollable impulse, lusting for his sister, leads her to a near-by fountain and when she, suspecting nothing, leans over to drink, drowns her, — "to keep her pure from my own lust", as he tells Alessandro. The two men are mourning for her when Anna finds her way to them; groping she touches the stooping men and feels

the cold corpse of the dead woman and at this moment, tragic above all, by an ironical stroke of Fate, perhaps rather in the interest of the symbolistic meaning of the play, her sight is restored to her. "I see! I see!" she cries.

The language of *The Dead City* is as superlatively masterly, the intrigue as static, the situations as rare as in earlier plays. Passages such as Leonardo's description of finding the tomb can scarcely be surpassed in all modern poetry for sheer beauty. Of course as dramatic dialogue this rich and eloquent lyric material is abnormal. As a matter of fact the play breaks down at several points because of excessive virtuosity.

The persons are not convincing as characters; they are rather mannequins in which the hand of the manipulator is constantly apparent, or better, each is an embodiment of some aspect or emotion of their creator, Gabriele D'Annunzio; they all tremble on the verge of madness, like the persons in some Maeterlinckian puppet show — *La Mort de Tintagiles* or *Pélléas et Mélisande.* Indeed both the psychology and the technic of this play indicate either D'Annunzio's kinship or his indebtedness to Maeterlinck — the broken phrases, the half-uttered sentences, the long significant silences, the atmosphere of tense fatality, the apprehension of "something evermore about to be", the terror of the invisible and unknowable — these are all in his cabinet of effects.

As drama *The Dead City* has this unforgivable fault, lack of action. The emotional effect is not inherent in the play, but is derived from each person's description of his feelings, from the externals, from D'Annunzio's description, his figures of speech, his images. Maria,

Leonardo and Alessandro are not vital and living beings; what moves us is not their struggle and suffering — but D'Annunzio's description of it. And it is unalterably true that no superweight of meaning, no deep-buried treasure of symbolism can justify lack of action or unreality of characterization in a piece that professes to be a drama.

La Gioconda (1898) poses the problem of the relation between the artist and society. Is he to be bound by the trammels of conventional morality, to submit himself to the laws which govern the rest of humanity, or is he to create a world for himself? D'Annunzio, of course, would answer this question in only one way: the artist is the superman in his field, the being to whom any form of behavior is permitted in his struggle to bring forth the perfect work of art. Little as such a subject might seem calculated to make an appeal to the general public, D'Annunzio, sustained by the sincerity of his conviction (it is almost the only conviction he has), wrote a really touching drama. Though the characters, the wife and the model who strive for possession of the artist, the artist himself, and the others are probably in the ultimate analysis allegorical or at least symbolistic figures, nevertheless in reading or witnessing the play, this aspect is subordinated to the human interest, and one thinks of them rather as living beings than as abstractions.

Lucio Settala, a sculptor, married to the lovely and intelligent Silvia, is nevertheless in love with his model, *La Gioconda*, whom he calls the most beautiful living creature. In desperation he has attempted to make way with himself, but rescued in time has been nursed back to health and strength by his neglected wife. In the

long months of convalescence under her tender care, he has forgotten the hectic fury of his passion for the other woman, his rage of creation, and is content to live in calm and peace, remembering his past with little more than mild regret. But a letter from La Gioconda suffices to reawaken in him all the thing he had sought to forget. She, after all, is his inspiration, she is the spur which goads him to create, her living breathing presence is to him the incarnation of beauty, of Art. While he owes his existence to the wife who has nursed him back to life, to the model he owes all his inspiration. As a symbol of this, she has been tending his unfinished masterpiece, a Sphinx, keeping it wrapped in wet cloths, ready for his hand. She has watched and guarded the work of his soul, his wife only his sick body. He loves his wife, she is a prop, a refuge, but she can never give him the dynamic electric impulse he gets from the model.

In the letter La Gioconda has said she would meet him at a certain hour at his studio. Silvia, knowing full well her husband will go, resolves to fight her own battle and hurries off to meet the woman before he can see her. Here is the crucial scene of the play, where the two women symbolizing the one the human duties and relationships of the artist, the other his creative impulse, lock in a fierce struggle for possession of him.

Silvia urges her right as wife of the man and mother of his children, but La Gioconda replies, "Household affections have no place here; domestic virtues have no rights of sanctuary. Here is a place outside laws and beyond common rights. Here a sculptor makes his statues. Here he is alone with the instruments of his art. Well, I am only one of the instruments of his art.

Nature has sent me to him to carry a message and to serve him. I obey!" Here is voiced the central thought of the drama. La Gioconda refuses to leave the studio until she is dismissed by Lucio himself. Then Silvia in desperation resorts to a lie, she says that she has been sent by her husband to deliver her message. The model is infuriated. "He is dead now," she cries, "dead to real life, and creation, dragged down by a cloying affection." She cannot bear to leave anything of herself with him. She darts behind the curtain which veils the unfinished statue. "I'll destroy it, I'll smash it!" In vain Silvia cries to her, "No! It is not true, I was lying." It is too late; Silvia too runs behind the curtain. There is a crash and a scream. La Gioconda runs quickly across the stage and out, as Silvia staggers from behind the curtain her hands wrapped in bloody cloths. Her hands, her beautiful hands have been crushed by the falling statue. At this moment Lucio appears just in time to receive his wife, who falls fainting into his arms sobbing, "It is safe, it is safe." It is a powerful scene, arousing the old primitive throb of terror and pity.

Most dramatists would have been content with this, but D'Annunzio has not yet sufficiently enforced his point, and he gives another act. Silvia is shown, alone with her little daughter, abandoned by her artist husband. Her sacrifice has won nothing for her; Lucio has gone off with the model. A strange beggar-maid is questioning Silvia — "Where are your beautiful hands? You gave them away? To whom." "To my love!" "What a cruel love!" and the girl sings the ballad of the Seven Sisters, a perfect jewel of a lyric. Silvia's little daughter comes with flowers she has picked, offering them to her mother.

She wonders why her mother will not take them. On this note of poignant but poetic sadness the play closes.

While the last act of *La Gioconda* as a bit of dramatic technic is an anticlimax, it is necessary in establishing this thesis. It must be shown that Silvia's supreme sacrifice is not only futile so far as the artist and his art are concerned, but also vain as concerns her own happiness. The artist, the super-soul, must seek the sphere in which his inspiration can live; the obligations of a domestic affection, however pure and noble, stifle and silence him.

Silvia is the dominating figure among the persons of the play. Indeed, as if from deliberate design the other persons are but sketched. By a pretty and significant stroke *La Gioconda* remains veiled throughout the play and we can judge of her marvelous beauty only by its effect upon Lucio. The device serves to throw into completer relief the noble, human, womanly character of Silvia. She is a keen-witted, adequate person, a strong and beautiful soul. When played by Duse (the play is dedicated to Eleonora Duse, *dalle belle mani*) this character is so limpidly simple, so free from sentimentality, so completely swayed by pure and generous impulses, so noble in its desolation, that one feels the play would better be called *The Tragedy of Silvia Settala.*

Glory (*La Gloria*) (1899) met with a hostile reception which, it must be confessed, it deserved. Maurice Muret calls it "a bastard work, tormented, bizarre, whose scattered beauties could not insure its success." Bastard it is in the sense of combining allegory and reality in a hopeless confusion; bastard also in its artificial and sentimental attempt to handle the problems and discussions

of modern life in terms of the antique. These things, and perhaps also the ferocious indelicacy of the play finally getting beneath the Italian skin, so displeased the audience that they hissed it from the stage, — which angered the poet to the point of dedicating the printed version to "the dogs who hissed it."

The first intention of the play was to present the superman in politics, but the dramatist seems to have been diverted from this original purpose as the play progressed to a study of the woman, half human, half symbolistic, who destroys lover after lover, always attaching herself to the man in power, to whom the "Glory" of the moment adheres. Come to analyze it, it is due to the baffling duality of this woman, Elena Comnena, who is neither of the flesh nor of the spirit, who is all-powerful in some directions and vaguer than a wreath of mist in others, — it is due to this confusion that *Glory* misses fire. To her lover Ruggero Flamma she seems to impersonate Glory — its beauty, its crimes, its bloodiness — but also its rewards and compensations. To the lover whom she has destroyed in order to attach herself to Ruggero, she is only the vampire incarnate, the antique Gorgon, the Rose of Hell, the unnamable Shame. D'Annunzio is fond of this lurid female, introducing her in all her essential lineaments in *The Ship*, in *The Light under the Bushel*, in *Fedra*, and as a less detailed figure in other plays. In none of her other appearances, however, does she exhibit that confusion between actuality and symbol that constitutes the central weakness of *Glory*.

The play has additional weakness; it is marred by inexcusable verbosity, and like all D'Annunzio's plays it completely lacks dramatic action; it displays, however,

the admirable qualities of the other plays, qualities literary rather than distinctly dramatic; and nothing short of astounding is the evocation of the atmosphere of Rome, — the city of blood and fire, Papal Rome.

One great interest that *Glory* holds for the student of D'Annunzio is its rather succinct reflection of his philosophy. Here is revealed his worship of power, his faith in *Machtpolitik;* the craving for infinite excitement which he interprets in his own manner as the worship of masculine virility; the apotheosis of the hero, of courage, of carnage. It reflects his belief in the purifying and revivifying properties of shed blood, — no man and no nation, it seems to say, can be truly itself until he or it has seen carnage. The ideal man appears as Nietzsche's "big beast" perhaps not "blond", with no morality but his strength, knowing no sanctions but those of the sword, recognizing none of the debilitating ideas of civilization, having no authority but his own impulses. Life is the progress of this hero through the gratification of his desires toward the fulfillment of his destiny. In *Glory* we may see the germs of that fire and that eloquence by which D'Annunzio did so much to precipitate Italy into the world war.

Francesca da Rimini (1901) has many of the qualities of a great play. It is declared by Eduardo Boutet, an authoritative Italian critic, to be "the first real, albeit not perfect, tragedy ever given to the Italian stage." Naturally one must allow something for a personal enthusiasm in this statement, and something for the lack of perspective of a contemporary judgment, but undoubtedly *Francesca da Rimini* has tremendous power as a human tragedy and great and abiding beauties as a work

of art. He is here handling a subject and setting particularly well suited to his powers — medieval Italy, its atmosphere and emotion, and the amorous passion. As a reconstruction of an epoch *Francesca da Rimini* is a masterpiece.

The story of Paolo and Francesca suggested in an immortal passage in Dante, the 5th canto of the *Inferno,* is retold in its entirety by Boccaccio in his commentary on the *Divina Commedia.* D'Annunzio reproduces almost exactly this version with the addition of certain minor characters and one major one, the major addition being Gianciotto's younger brother, Malatestino, a ferocious, cunning, bloodthirsty boy, the very spirit of baleful revenge. Francesca is trapped into marrying the elderly and lame Gianciotto by being led to believe that it is his brother Paolo, young and beautiful, whom she is to wed. Too late to withdraw or to protest she discovers her mistake. When she is married to Gianciotto she and Paolo have already fallen in love with each other. They reveal their love in a famous scene for which the play might have been written, so loaded is it with beauty and meaning — centering about the episode described by Francesca in the *Inferno* — the episode of the lovers reading "*per diletto di Lancelotto, Come amor lo stringe.*" In the play the lovers are betrayed by the ferocious young Malatestino who had himself courted Francesca in vain, and being surprised together are slain by the grieved and insulted husband.

The beauty of *Francesca da Rimini* is multiform and has many sources — the verse, musical and rich beyond praise; the imaginative settings, each the creation of an artist; the atmosphere, authentic, vibrant, surcharged

with passion; the picturesque and revelatory accessories, such as Francesca's playing with the "Greek fire" on the battlements, or Malatestino's dragging about in a sack the head of the prisoner he had decapitated.

But D'Annunzio has missed completely, or has deliberately forgone the austere grandeur of Dante's Paolo and Francesca, the "worried souls." De Sanctis in discussing the passage in the *Inferno* speaks of the consciousness of sin which penetrates the whole episode, the delicacy, the sweetness, the modesty, the reticence, which fill the words of the guilty and doomed Francesca, revealing at the same time the force of that passion which leaves her not and will never leave. D'Annunzio has written instead (the words are his own) "a poem of blood and lust." Francesca is not the unfortunate victim of a fateful accident, but a passionate being who glories in her love, and who justifies her surrender to a guilty love by the deception practiced upon her. None of these people think or reason; they stand for human nature reduced to its lowest terms of impulse and appetite; but this process does not in this play, as it does in *The Dead City*, destroy the effect of life. The men and women of the far-off barbarous epoch of *Francesca da Rimini* were no dreamers, or æsthetic degenerates or splitters of emotional hairs. They were the tools and agents of their instincts and passions, and D'Annunzio has managed to make Paolo, Francesca, Gianciotto and Malatestino convincing.

The Daughter of Jorio (*La Figlia di Jorio*) is of 1904. It is intended as the first of a great trilogy on the poet's native Abruzzi, in which he designs to interpret to the world the inner soul of his fatherland, in all its beauty and savagery, its ignorance, superstition and strength.

He has attained his end in *The Daughter of Jorio* with a great power and skill. Again, as in *The Dead City*, he has followed the Greek form, the bridal party and the reapers in the first act, the mob gathered to witness the execution in the fifth serving as chorus. A young shepherd, Aligi, on his betrothal day, offers protection to Mila, the daughter of Jorio, a notorious magician, when she is pursued by a party of reapers and takes refuge in his house. He is about to cast her out when he beholds a vision of an angel standing behind her. They fall in love and flee together to the mountains. His father comes to get him and to possess himself of the girl, and in protecting her the son slays his parent. Tried for patricide he is condemned to be cast bound into the river in a sack with a ferocious mastiff. But Mila appears and takes the guilt upon herself: she has bewitched him, she says. She consummates her sacrifice in the flames, crying "Oh, the fire is beautiful, the fire is beautiful."

The Daughter of Jorio is one of the most actable and acceptable of D'Annunzio's plays; the reality of the animalism and brutality surrounding the beautiful and pure heroine is a bit of effective contrast calculated to appeal strongly to the somewhat jaded palates of the modern Italian theatre-goers. Then, too, as in *Francesca da Rimini*, the subject-matter has a special appeal for Italian audiences; the characters are of the violent primitive type that the poet knew how to create and the verse is superb, as always. The weakness and formlessness in dramatic structure are but characteristic.

The Light under the Bushel (*La Fiaccola sotto il moggio*) (1905), another of the Abruzzese trilogy, is far inferior to its predecessor, and lacking in finish. The tale of the

servant who by mere physical attraction gains an ascendancy over her master, murders his wife, tries to ensnare his brother, poisons his son, brings about the suicide of his daughter in a most horrible manner and is finally murdered by the disdeluded master — the story is too, too lurid! The primitive force of *The Daughter of Jorio* here degenerates into violence; the exaggerated passions become grotesque. Melodrama, always lurking at the door of the "powerful" poet, takes the place of drama. The very beauty of the language is swallowed up in the impossible horror of the plot. Augizia di Tura, the servant, is his most complete incarnation of the eternal feminine as D'Annunzio understands it; she is the Flesh, the Enemy, the Sovereign Mistress. She is confronted in the play by the daughter of the woman she has murdered, Monica di Sangro, the incarnation in her turn of implacable and pitiless vengeance. The drama is the struggle of these two women.

D'Annunzio now again turned his attention to a modern theme and the Superman in *More than Love* (*Più che l'amore*) (1907). As in *La Gioconda* in the field of art, so here in the world of action D'Annunzio justifies the strong man in any deed that fulfills his destiny. D'Annunzio weakens his play and nullifies his doctrine to the point of inanity, however, by allowing his hero to suffer a penalty for his misdeeds as any ordinary mortal might. Corrado Brando is an African explorer who, refused funds for his researches by the government, obtains them by murdering an ignoble gambler and stealing his purse. Unfortunately his precautions have not been properly taken; he is betrayed by a detail, and with the police on his trail, puts a bullet into himself rather than suffer the ignominy of a

vulgar punishment. But his mission does not die with him. He leaves a child yet to be born. The sister of his best friend whom he has seduced and who loves him the more for this, announces to him this future and glorious event as he lies dying.

To this curious complex of realism and melodrama D'Annunzio has dedicated language of the most exquisite beauty and most extraordinary abundance. For two hundred pages, his characters talk in glittering figures and rare phrases. The engineer, the surgeon, the explorer pour out sentences worthy of the most erudite and gifted poet, — a piece of pedantry on the part of the author which goes to confirm the judgment that he has no sense of the differentiation of characters, the absolutely essential dramatic gift. As one reads, he is carried along on a flood-tide of words, but behind the footlights *More than Love* withers into the driest of bones. The play could never have been written by a man with a sense of humor, its absurdities are really too patent. Like *Glory, More than Love* was a flat failure in the theater.

More success attended the production of *The Ship* (*La Nave*) (1908) because it was much better suited to its author's genius, which is mos genuinely at home in the remote. As in *Francesca da Rimini* the action is set in the Middle Ages; its success was even more immediate and more pronounced because, as it happens, the play strikes a patriotic note dealing with the Italian aspiration to make the Adriatic an Italian lake; and because it is a much better piece of drama. The "Übermensch" again walks the boards in the person of Marco Gratico, but the real center of the play is the heroine, the courtesan Basiliola, the embodiment of powerful tempting pleasure. She is

blood-sister to Elena Comnena, Augizia di Tura, and Fedra.

The Ship is not an organic play, but is made up of "a Prologue and three episodes", with little connection between the acts. The scene is Byzantine Venice at the end of the Middle Ages when the Queen of the Adriatic was at the height of her power. One of D'Annunzio's critics compares the drama to a spectacle in the Roman Coliseum, an apt comparison, for *The Ship* partakes of the bloody, sensual, gorgeous, religious, pagan character of those sinister *circenses*.

The Prologue shows five blind men, — Orso Faledra and his four sons who have been tortured by the Doge Marco Gratico. In the background is building a great Ship, *Totus Mundus*, symbol of the new-born nation. The Sister of the Faledras, Basiliola, reaches Venice from the Orient, where she had become an adept in corruption. She resolves to wreak terrible vengeance on Marco Gratico; she inflames him and all Venice by offering herself to the victor in the race for political power in the city; she sows dissension between him and his brother — the bishop of Venice. The first episode takes place beside a terrible pit where prisoners are thrown to die. Basiliola passes by. A young man begs her to kill him to put him out of his misery. She will not until by insults he angers her. Then she seizes a bow from the guard and slays him with an arrow. Then all the prisoners, possessed by blood-lust, call upon her to shoot them, and one at a time she kills them, until at last there remains only one youth. He asks a moment's respite to pile up the corpses of his comrades, so she may take a better aim. An amorous dialogue is carried on between them, and

she covers with kisses the head of the arrow which pierces his heart. During the whole scene the magnificent liturgical songs of the church, chanted by men's voices in a near-by basilica, drown the dying cries of the prisoners.

In the second episode Basiliola dances a licentious dance "half naked, her shoulders inundated with her tawny hair, a bare sword in her hand." She incites the Gratico brothers to a fight in which the bishop Sergio, now become her lover, is slain, and she remains in the hands of her enemy, the Tribune, her former lover.

The last episode caps the climax of beauty, irreligion and horror. Marco Gratico, before he starts on a voyage in the *Totus Mundus* to expiate his fratricide, decides that Basiliola shall have her eyes burned out, suffering the same torture as her father and brothers. But by her charms she so influences the executioner that he cannot perform his task. Then Marco Gratico decrees that she shall be nailed naked to the prow of the great ship as its figurehead. In desperation at this Basiliola rushes to an altar where fire is burning and casts herself into the flames. She dies as the great Ship glides down the ways into the water, the cross on the poop, the Virgin at the mast-head amid the exalted "Hallelujahs" of the crowd.

Any analysis of *The Ship* does it injustice. It is really not a play but a grandiose epic in dialogue in which choruses of neophytes, of worshippers, of prisoners, hold converse with the individuals; where a whole people is the protagonist and the Adriatic the hero. It contains gorgeously beautiful lyrical passages. Scenes like that of the shooting of the prisoners and the amorous dialogue, the temptation of the executioner, are particularly fine. It is the orchestration in words, with sumptuous harmony

of rhythms and phrases, that made the success of *The Ship*.

Fedra (1909) is a revamping of the well-known theme of the Hippolytos of Euripides, also worked over by Racine. Phaedra, thinking her husband dead, gives free rein to her passion for her stepson, who, however, does not yield to her importunity. When her husband returns, resentful at having been spurned by Hippolytos, she accuses him falsely of making advances to her. D'Annunzio's *Fedra* is not the innocent wife of Euripides seduced by her own weakness and the machinations of her nurse, nor yet the *grande amoureuse* of Racine, victim of the wrath of Venus. She is again the personification of the eternal harlot. The desire kindled in her by the youth and beauty of Hippolytos is coarse and fleshly and she rejoices in her lust. Once Hippolytos is dead the flame of fury dies down in Fedra, a pure and pale light envelops her. She proclaims the innocence of the youth, but glories in her love. His death has purified and cleansed her. She invokes the Huntress, chaste Artemis; a moon ray, a livid arrow, pierces her and she falls upon the corpse of the youth, smiling. Much of *Fedra* is taken from the poet's lyrical outburst, the *Laus Vitae*. When it was played, though it failed, certain passages were received with favor.

D'Annunzio has always been under French influence; the evidence as to his borrowing is irrefutable. Flaubert, De Maupassant, Baudelaire, Barrès, Huysmans, Maeterlinck, and many others are all ground in his mill and given out again as bread of his own making. Maurice Barrès is his particular friend and he was acquainted with Emile Verhaeren. To the former he has dedicated his *Martyrdom*

of Saint Sebastian (*Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien*) (1911) written with Claude Debussy. It is a product of his new symbolistic tendencies, his neo-Christianity, and a certain erotico-mystic tendency already visible in *The Ship*. *The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian* is called "*un mystère composé en rythme français*," and well so called, for it is not a play but a mystery, in the manner of the medieval French mysteries, and is written, not in the conventional rhymed verse of French tragedy but in unrhymed lines of lengths varying to suit the tempo of the scene. It is a dramatic poem in *vers libre*, describing the conversion and martyrdom of Sebastian, the beautiful archer, the friend of Augustus. It was written for the Russian dancer, Ida Rubenstein, and was first played by her; D'Annunzio says it was her "sexless grace" which first inspired him with the idea of Saint Sebastian.

Whoever attempts to stage the *Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian* does it a great wrong. The wonderful scenes, the magnificent tableaux which enchant the reader's visual imagination become under the borders the merest tinsel; the sapphire dome is a blue back-cloth, the whirling signs of the zodiac, discs of wood; the dance of the Saint in imitation of the Passion a grotesque and blasphemous mummery. Those who praise the play confine themselves to its literary qualities; those who find fault with it are mainly discussing its dramatic aspects. Claude Debussy has provided enchanting music, interpreting to a nicety the course of action and emotion.

The Pisan Woman, or Perfumed Death (*La Pisanella ou la mort parfumée*) (1913) was also written in French for Ida Rubenstein. D'Annunzio returns to his old stamping-ground, the Renaissance, and to the tragedy of passion

and blood (he calls it "comedy"). In Paris *La Pisanella* met with the chilling reception it so richly merited. In three acts and a prologue it follows the career of another magnificent sinner, the Woman of Pisa. She is brought as a slave from the Orient and taken by the Prince of Cyprus as his destined bride, being placed by him in a convent for safe-keeping. He and his father, the king, quarrel over her and the son is killed. In the last act the Queen, jealous of her influence over the King, has her put to death by being smothered in roses to the sound of exquisite music.

La Pisanella is as hectic as *The Ship* — a spectacle of blood lust and lasciviousness, at one and the same time terrifying and voluptuous. Its very excesses, however, turn it into grotesque. It was no doubt this mad profusion of material and emotion that rendered it unacceptable in France. Its French is not equal to that of *Saint Sebastian;* it has more of a foreign flavor and the verse has become still more free and less studiedly beautiful.

Parisina (*Tragedia lirica*) (1913) has been set to music by Mascagni. It is the second member of the trilogy of the Malatesti of which *Francesca da Rimini* was the first. The religious element, or rather the element of religiosity strong in *The Ship,* more so in *Saint Sebastian,* becomes here even more pervading. The play is built around a pilgrimage to Loreto and is full of prayers and liturgical chants. D'Annunzio has ever been an admirer of the dramatic side of Roman Catholic ritual and has given it a large place in his plays and novels, many of which are permeated and as it were decorated with Catholic beliefs. Indeed D'Annunzio as a philosopher is an un-

believer but as an artist always thinks in terms of the Catholic faith.

Parisina dei Malatesti, married against her will to Nicholas II of Ferrara, at first hates her stepson, Ugo, but later comes to love him. Parisina makes a pilgrimage to Loreto with Ugo as an escort. When the sanctuary is attacked by Saracens, his enemies, Ugo defends it and his young stepmother. He is victorious but is wounded severely in the combat. Parisina cares for him and their love is brought to a consummation. But they are betrayed and by order of the tyrant, husband of the one and father of the other, are executed. The scene of the execution is the artistic heart of the play, Parisina's death being especially touching. The last act is taken up with the remorse of Nicholas.

Parisina offers nothing new or distinctive in D'Annunzio's work, and any discussion of its faults or its merits would be but a repetition of what has been said about all his recent plays. It was, however, written in Italian.

After this Italian interlude D'Annunzio returned again to French and to prose with a drama in a modern setting, on an old theme, *The Honeysuckle* (*La Chevrefeuille*, 1913, translated as *The Knife*, *Il Ferro*, 1914). Two names spring at once into the mind in connection with *The Honeysuckle*, — those of Electra and of Hamlet, for Aude, the heroine, like these two unhappy creatures, is the instrument of revenge on the murderer of her father, who has married her mother; like Electra she is actuated by a burning desire for revenge; like Hamlet she is given to melancholy and brooding.

Aude is tortured by a terrible secret, which prevents her from sleeping, overclouds her life, embitters and

revolts her. What this is we do not find out for two acts while she raves and the intrigue is getting under way.

It is said that *The Honeysuckle* derived its title from the *lai* of Marie de France, though what the connection is between the Tristan and Iseult story and D'Annunzio's play is hard to see. The appeal of this play, written in prose, is addressed to the nerves rather than to the emotions or the intellect. There is an excessive, almost irritating, use of the principle of suspense, for after two long acts of waiting to learn Aude's terrible secret, the spectator begins to feel bored. By putting his explanation so far toward the end of the play D'Annunzio loses more than he gains. By keeping the horror veiled he hopes to heighten our sense of it, but is only successful in making us sceptical about its existence and annoyed at having a neurotic patient for a heroine. As usual the main beauties of the drama are in the accessories.

If one follows D'Annunzio's career as dramatist from its early stages to *The Honeysuckle,* or rather to *Saint Sebastian,* it becomes clear that progressively he insists more upon the scenic, spectacular side of the drama. From the first dramatic *Dreams* through *The Dead City, Glory, The Light under the Bushel, Francesca da Rimini,* and *The Ship* this development goes on to culminate in the dance dramas, *The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian* and *La Pisanella.* The stage directions become longer and more complicated, large portions of the action are mute, the picture becomes more and more important. In his last production, a cinema play, *Cabiria,* he has taken the last logical step and made a drama of action and spectacle only.

Cabiria is probably a mere side excursion of its author

into a field not properly his own, but he takes pains to justify and explain it in a letter which throws some light on his recent development. Sensitive as he is to the mode, D'Annunzio has not failed to take up with the art-theatre movement in the revolt against the realistic theatre and its demand for the imaginative renewal of the drama. He quotes Gordon Craig. "The drama," he says, "is sterile. She is exhausted by the strain put upon her and can bear no progeny in the old manner. The drama of words, the lifelike play, is a thing of the dead past. The only way we can hope to revive the art is by going back to the original plastic idea of the stage as a picture. Drama becomes ballet, acting — dancing. The appeal to the ear must be supplemented, if not supplanted, by the appeal to the eye." Then he goes off into an apology for the picture-play and a speculation as to its future. It is a liberating factor in the fact that it is not bound by the limits of the theatre; it can depict all human and natural activity; it has no limits of time or space. Miracles can be shown, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* for example; the heroic ages of the past, the great discoveries of archæology are fitting subjects. It is capable of anything, always with the limitation that it is a machine and inanimate. All this is from an interesting letter of D'Annunzio's.

The plot of *Cabiria* needs no description. Suffice it to say it is laid at the epoch of the Second Punic War and follows the orphan girl, Cabiria, through many hair-raising adventures — volcanic eruptions, pirates, conflagrations and battles — until she marries the young man of her choice. It is mixed up with the story of Sophonisba. There are many striking things in *Cabiria;* the giant

Nubian slave is a most picturesque figure, and some of the scenes — like the interior of the temple, the spectacle of a caravan crossing the desert — are in the poet's very best style. His pictorial imagination has the fullest sway unhampered by the exigencies of reality, and in consequence *Cabiria* is a fine spectacle, but as drama it is of little moment.

D'Annunzio's latest production is a *Tragedia lirica, La Piave* (1918), to which Italo Montemezzi has written music.

Since the outbreak of the great war he has devoted himself mainly to aviation, oratory and to the writing of a romance, his *Leda without the Swan* (*Leda senza cigno*). He has announced several plays, however, among them the final member of the Malatesta trilogy, *Sigismondo Malatesta,* a modern play, *La Pietà,* a *San Francesco* and an *Amaranta.*

The study of the eighteen plays of Gabriele D'Annunzio thus completed, may one modestly attempt a summing up of the "divo Gabriele" as a dramatist? There is no denying that he is the foremost artist of present-day Italy. The Italian literary world is divided into two camps, D'Annunzians and non-D'Annunzians. How does it happen that his influence, so great as to amount to a furor, has been acquired by a series of plays none of which has been a success? With the greatest of Italian actresses, one of the greatest in the world — Eleonora Duse — as his interpretress, he has nevertheless not produced a single popular play in the sense that Giacosa's *As the Leaves* or Rovetta's *Romanticism* is popular. *La Gioconda* had a merest *succès d'estime* and the majority have been flat failures; *Glory, The Light under the*

Bushel, More than Love, Fedra were all hissed. How then is it that D'Annunzio has so commanding a position?

In the first place he carries over into the drama a large portion of the fame and authority he justly achieved in other fields. As novelist and lyric poet he easily stands foremost in the Italian world; his dramatic fame is a reflection derived from his literary renown. In the second place, he has really many beauties, a play of his being like a necklace of glittering things, some of them jewels — and the string weak.

Homage must be paid to his literary virtuosity, about which too much can scarcely be said. There has never been an Italian writer who had so masterly and brilliant a command of words. "He flings them boldly about, right and left, with the air of one who inherits the Latin culture of a thousand years and exults in the mastery of the sweetest language the world has known." He is the Richard Strauss of modern Italian, having every resource of linguistic orchestration at his command. His flow of images is truly marvelous; the balance of his sentences is perfect, his taste exquisite. In this element of his art lies a large part of the secret of his appeal to Italian audiences. D. H. Lawrence in his *Twilight in Italy* describes a production of *The Light under the Bushel* in a tiny provincial town. The peasants are carried away. "'Oh, bello, bellissimo,' they cry. It was the language that did it. It was the Italian passion for rhetoric, for the speech which appeals to the senses and makes no demand on the mind. When an Englishman listens to a speech he wants at least to imagine that he understands thoroughly and impersonally what is meant,

but the Italian only cares about the emotion. It is the movement, the physical effects of the language upon the blood which gives him the supreme satisfaction. His mind is scarcely engaged at all. He is like a child hearing and feeling without understanding. It is the sensuous gratification he is after. D'Annunzio can control the current of the blood with his words."

His greatest merit is closely, perhaps even causally, bound up with one of his greatest faults. D'Annunzio himself is often deceived by his own words into taking them for drama and substituting speech for action. "A German critic speaks slightingly of '*Das Geklingel der schönen Phrasen*' — the jingling of dulcet phrases — as a positive obstacle to the action — an entirely just opinion. Often we feel that we cannot hear the play because of the words," says James Huneker.

More than once in the discussion of the plays D'Annunzio has been described as having a vivid pictorial imagination. This is another of his valuable dramatic assets. Each set and each tableau is a masterpiece. His early training as a painter has here borne fruit. He calls to his aid all the plastic arts, each grouping of figures, each gesture of the actor is thought out. "A stage manager without a rival, he is at the same time, when he is at his best, a painter, a sculptor, and an architect. Everything is combined in his theatre to obtain a happy grouping of the personages to evoke from the harmonious attitudes, gracious gestures, tragic or solemn." As he grows older this element becomes stronger, greater care being taken with every play to make scene and action harmonize. The setting becomes, as in *Saint Sebastian*, for example, a vehicle coördinate in importance with the words them-

selves; the stage directions become more and more elaborate and more and more integral. It has been said that a stage direction is a playwright's confession of weakness — implying as it does his inability to get his detail into the dialogue. D'Annunzio's innumerable stage directions seem to call for a division into two classes, — those which embody description of setting and other accessories, which are legitimate; and those which embody some matter integral to the play, which are illegitimate since such matters should be incorporated by some means into the body of the play.

Benedetto Croce speaks of D'Annunzio's objectivity, his sense of the reality of external objects. For him the things of the world have an actuality almost passionate. From his early contact with the Verists, French and Italian, he acquired a keen faculty of observation and retentive memory for details; from his archæological and artistic studies, love of beautiful works of art. Details of beauty and horror stamp themselves indelibly upon his memory to be used later as the occasion requires. The visible world exists to him in as real a sense as to Théophile Gautier. The plays are intensely objective as to all accessories.

In another sense, however, there was never an artist more subjective. His plays are but one long and varied study of himself. He is deficient in "dramaticity", in the power of making live other beings outside his own being. The minor characters, those he sketches in, are perhaps, indeed most often, the product of observation; his major characters are the result of introspection, personifications of his own moods and emotions. The constant recurrence of the same types will be sufficient

proof of this — the sinful, beautiful woman, the bloodthirsty hero subjected to the sinful woman, the Superman, — these types recur again and yet again.

Among his dramatic assets must be reckoned a fine sense of the tragic and an eye for situation. Nevertheless scenes of real pathos, such as the third act of *La Gioconda* and the third act of *Francesca da Rimini*, alternate with claptrap, such as Silvia's appearing with her hands crushed, the torturing of prisoners by Malatestino, the shooting of the captives by Basiliola and the smothering of *La Parisina*. Karl Vossler describes his development thus, "from poet to virtuoso, to decorator, to craftsman, to charlatan."

It would seem that in any summary of his qualities as a dramatist, certain striking merits must always be accredited to him. Among these are an unvarying virtuosity of style, a vivid pictorial imagination, a keen eye for actuality, a sense of tragedy and the whole darker side of human nature and experience, an ability to construct effective detached situations. As to his faults, the obvious ones are the substitution of words for action, the inability to project his creative imagination into another personality, the monotony of his major persons, the egoism which renders the persons of the play mere projections of his own qualities and moods, the cold and cruel failure of interest in men as human beings.

If this appraisal seems severe it should be compared with the estimates given of his dramatic work by contemporary Italian critics. Garguilio and Borgese, the latest of these critics, have scarcely a good word to say of him as a playwright, giving all their praise to him as a poet and a novelist. A few considerations may be

offered to reinforce the appraisal of D'Annunzio, and to justify its apparent severity.

His insuperable limitation to re-creating people on the stage is that he has no humanity. He is not interested in life nor has he sympathy or understanding. Life is to him merely an æsthetic exhibit, as it were, a work of art in which the weak suffer and the strong triumph. Morality, love for one's fellow, sympathy, are suppressed in the search for beauty. He might well have said with the French actor, "What matter the deed so the gesture be beautiful." Artistic torture, graceful murder, lovely crime, are justified. He has no social sense. All the humanitarianism, socialism, communism and great movements of recent years are as non-existent to him. The sight of poverty excites neither indignation nor compassion in him. He perceives wretchedness as clearly as any artist but does not react from it. To Verga, for example, rags are pitiable, to D'Annunzio they are picturesque. True drama is not made of such stuff but is compound of the human heart. Æsthetic hero and heroine leave us cold.

A second defect, a corollary of the first, is that D'Annunzio has not a grain of humor, not a spark of wit. There are but two strings to his lyre, the beautiful and the horrible; as for the humorous, the satirical, the pathetic, the kindly, they do not exist. In the whole of his vast production there is not even a humorous, much less a funny scene. The very first act of *Francesca da Rimini* contains a passage in which the jester exchanges coarse jibes with the serving women. It is far more grotesque than laughable, but is the only approach to comedy in all the eighteen dramas. It is inexpressibly

trying to sit through five solid hours of, let us say, *The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian* and never once relax into a smile.

Time and again it has been pointed out that D'Annunzio has no sense of the theatre; his subjects are subjects for treatment in other forms. Arthur Symons's criticism of *The Dead City* serves as a criticism of all the plays. "He has transplanted the novel to the stage, and by sheer force of emotion he has made the conversations absorbingly interesting, even when they are not, properly speaking, dramatic. Whenever he attempts to make the ordinary stage effects he does them crudely, and, unfortunately, he is not content to do without them altogether. But in the greater part of the play he does without them, and it is then that by a very specious sort of simplicity, he creates an atmosphere entirely his own, in which certain human beings, reduced to the elements of sensation, to whatever is fundamentally animal in the soul, move strangely and yet according to their nature, electrically alive, suffering all the agonies of instinct in conflict with instinct." D'Annunzio's dramas are in a state of ecstatic immobility, psychologically as well as from the point of view of intrigue. We have beings filled with impulses; their bosoms pant, they are unsatisfied, they hate, and love, and — do nothing. Their creator cherishes the verse:

"*Je haïs le mouvement qui déplace la ligne.*"

The essential fault of *The Dream of a Spring Morning*, that the protagonist being a mad woman has no spiritual development, is the fault of all the remaining plays. With perhaps one exception, that of *Fedra*, the characters

think and act and feel precisely the same at the end of the last act as at the beginning of the first.

Finally, and not least important, D'Annunzio has no message to convey. He is the supreme dilettante. It is of prime importance in the drama to seek to please, to attempt no heavy-handed preaching, but in these our modern days when all humanity is concerned with vital solutions, that is not sufficient. One is not presenting human beings at all if he is presenting them without these interests. And to present human beings is the supreme duty and the paramount privilege of the drama. Here D'Annunzio misses fire; he does not understand or care about modern life; he lives in his own world apart from the rest, a world compounded of the partially unreconcilable elements of literary reminiscence, self-worship, hysterical patriotism, blood-lust, instinct, and ritualism, shut off from actuality by an impenetrable ego. Socialism to him is merely the triumph of the many-headed beast, the people; morality the empty prejudice of a worn-out tradition; comradeship a mockery; the only reality is beauty and self. Karl Vossler likens him to a moth flitting about the burning flame of modern life. Maurice Muret says his instability is not insincerity, as some Italian critics have called it, but rather the two keen perceptions of a many-sided intelligence. However that may be, he has no convictions and is in consequence not convincing. He has nothing to say to modern men, and contents himself with tickling their æsthetic senses.

Gabriele D'Annunzio's position in the drama has yet to be fixed. With all his faults he stands out as the greatest literary man on the stage to-day. Benedetto Croce says of him, "Is he a constructive thinker and a sage? Is he a

profound and coherent philosopher? A good counselor? No. But he is a poet and that ought to suffice; the more so that this species of poets by divine right is rarer than that of the sages, the reasoners, and the good counselors." D'Annunzio is a great lyric poet who has turned to writing plays.

CHAPTER V

The Later Realists

Enrico Annibale Butti is called by Italian critics an Ibsenite: they say that he has acquired both inspiration and technic, both manner and matter, from the Scandinavian master. But one feels that they base this statement upon superficial resemblances, such as the preponderance of talk over action, a certain tendency toward symbolism, discursiveness, a pedagogic leaning. They find all these things and conclude that Butti is a genuine Ibensite. Indeed, Butti, through the mouth of Domenico Oliva, in the preface to his *Utopia*, says of himself, "He boasts of his debt to Ibsen; he says and sustains it that he has understood perfectly the æsthetic conception of the author of *Ghosts* and *The Master Builder*, and since this conception pleased him and he found it in conformity with his own artistic tendencies and those of the intellectual age through which we are passing, he seized upon it and produced a work in which he tries to point out some of the great contradictions of our stormy contemporary spirit."

Butti, having boasted of his adherence to the tenets of Ibsen, calls for an investigation of his claim. Indeed, as regards the externals there is a decidedly Scandinavian aspect to *Utopia*, *The Race for Pleasure* and *Lucifer*. But below this surface, what a difference in spirit and in thought! Butti has taken themes that Ibsen might have

used, but has transposed them into the Italian mode, and in the transformation has so emasculated and denatured them that instead of being grim and uncompromising arraignments of prejudice, or magnificent revolts against dead custom, they are an amiable justification of the existing order, — as if *Die Götterdämmerung* were to be re-orchestrated by Rossini.

Ibsen's bleak manliness and virility become in Butti nervousness and agitation. The profound conviction that follows the reading of *A Doll's House* or *Hedda Gabler* has no adequate counterpart in the vague discontent or the baffled unrest that one feels after seeing *The End of an Ideal* or *The Tempest* — the one in Butti's own estimation demonstrating the futility of revolt against society; the other refuting the doctrines of feminism. In our bewilderment, we find ourselves saying, "We have seen your unfortunate sufferers, their wretched circumstances; we have responded to your appeal to pity them. What shall now be done or said?" Here Butti fails us, and his failure is not the noble abstention from moralizing of the great artist, as it is in the case of Ibsen, who always adumbrates the solution of his problem in the terms of the problem itself; but it is the silence of a man who has no solution in his mind, who has not faced the logic of his own events.

Butti is in reality facing backward. His plays are a series of attempts to disprove or to discredit aspects of modern thought or modern social reform which do not please him; in *Utopia*, eugenics; in *The End of an Ideal*, feminism; in *The Tempest*, socialism; in *Lucifer*, theoretical science and modernism in religion; in *Ever Thus*, the emancipation of woman and free love. He seems merely pessimistic and destructive because he has no

solution, and not once does he vindicate one of the newer ideas. When a man elects to be a critic of society, even as a dramatist, we have a right to ask, when he attacks liberal religious thought and the scientific interpretation of the world, "What do you suggest in the place of these? What shall we do with the problems feminism proposes to solve? What shall we do about the miseries created by a tyrannical marriage?" These questions Butti ignores.

He has decided gifts as a portraitist, a faculty for telling dialogue, and a method of developing *états d'âme*, so that away from thesis drama, he is capable of writing first-rate plays. *Flames in the Dark*, for example, avoids the uncertain ground of controversy, skirts modern problems, and presents a strong, noble spiritual study of an admirable type of Italian priests. The comedies, too, exhibit a successful side of Butti's talent. They are bitter and satiric, like *The Giant and the Pygmies*, or farcically laughable, like *The Cuckoo*, but always they are good and genuine comedy.

Butti among the modern Italian playwrights is most concerned with personal problems of members of society, rather than with their relations to one another. The debates between science and religion which, belated in Italy, were in full blast there ten or fifteen years ago, yield his characteristic material. He saw that in the minds of the multitude there was an irreconcilable antithesis between the rationalistic-materialistic view of life, as embodied in Darwinism and the other philosophies based on natural science on the one hand, and the dogmas of religion on the other, — religion, of course, to Butti, as to all Italians, meaning Roman Catholicism. It

is disbelief that Butti means by "science" rather than anything constructive. Life, he says, must have an end which cannot be mere pleasure (*The Race for Pleasure*); we must have an adequate explanation and consolation for suffering (*Lucifer*), and these we find only in the bosom of the Church; there is solace, there peace, and if it cannot satisfy the cravings of the curious mind, so much the worse for the mind. In spite of the narrow limitations created by these views his work is sincere and serious, — a genuinely valuable study in the ideas of contemporary Italy. That his tendencies were not in accord with the rest of the world, outside of his own circle, that "the times are out of joint" for him, makes him less illuminating as a teacher, but does not vitiate the sincerity with which he presents his problems.

Enrico Annibale Butti was born in Milan in 1868, and died of phthisis, poor and wretched, in 1915. An only son, the pet of his parents, he was too domestically and too delicately reared. He inherited from his father a sanguine, even violent temperament; from his mother those qualities which contributed most to make him a literary man, — a lively imagination, sensibility, intelligence. His early teachers discovered in him an aptitude for mathematics, and following their advice, Butti went to the University, entering the faculty of physics and mathematics. After passing brilliant examinations for the first two years, he wearied of this branch of learning and went into medicine. Doctoring, he soon discovered, was also not to his taste, and once more he shifted, this time to the faculty of law, where he took a degree. In the meanwhile, though he was not yet twenty and still a student, he began to write, his first attempts being fiction.

His father urged him to go into a law office, but his heart was not in the work, and after he had thrown away his first case in a ludicrous manner, he retired definitely from the law and gave himself entirely over to writing. He never made a great name, or achieved a substantial popularity; he was much too purely intellectual to make a commercial success. Through all his life he seemed to be pursued by relentless ill luck; he died in disease and poverty. He was out of harmony with his milieu and his epoch, which fact, rather than some occult influence, accounts for what he called ill luck.

Butti could scarcely have been better prepared for a literary career. Well educated and richly endowed by nature, he had encountered nearly all the dominating ideas of the nineteenth century; he had strengthened and exercised his dialectic powers in his years of training for the law, and his faculty for close observation and analysis in his medical studies. Like Sainte-Beuve, who traced to his student days at the École de Médecine the genesis of his critical method, Butti sharpened his interest in natural science and its methods, getting especially a view of the problems of the relations of mind and body. He acquired, too, the clinical method of studying souls. From his academic training he retained also a love of ideas for their own sake, rather than for their practical application. It may be reckoned a fault of Butti's, as it is of Bernard Shaw, that he almost invariably presents both sides of his case, making the opposing side, if anything, the stronger; he so adequately gives the Devil his due that one is never sure that he is not the Devil's disciple. His first novel, *The Immoral Man* (*L'Immorale*), produced in his law school days, discusses the

relation, or rather contradiction, between law and justice, and the question of punishment for crime.

Before he turned to drama, like D'Annunzio late in life, Butti wrote several more novels: *The Automaton* (*L'Automate*), in which man is regarded as a plaything in the hands of nature, not acting but acted upon, *la bête humaine* (in Zola's phrase), who is but putty in the hands of the woman who exasperates his sensuality; *The Soul* (*L'Anima*) sternly essays to prove the existence of the soul and its immortality, confronting a sceptical young medical student with a philosophic turn and an epileptic young woman, whose visions and hallucinations convert him to belief in the supernatural. In *The Enchantment* (*L'Incantesimo*), his other novel of importance, the enchantment is love, the experience of sex, which overcomes and transforms the originally misogynous hero. At the time of producing these last novels, Butti was in possession of his full mental powers and his technic as a writer; he had a style simple yet subtle enough to enable him to express fine shades of meaning; he had forgotten much of his pedantic youthful erudition and had read enough of northern dramatists, Scandinavian, German, and French, to have come under the spell of the drama of ideas.

The Bitter Fruit (*Il frutto amaro*), his first attempt, need not detain us, but *Utopia* (*L'utopia*) (1894) contains much that is best in his plays and more that is essential to the study of them. It registers in his opinion the bankruptcy of pseudo-science and, to a certain degree, of real science. Its Doctor Serchi is trying to rebuild the world by rational methods. In his Utopia, all prejudices and superstitions give way to the practical business of im-

proving the human race. He preaches the emancipation of women from the servitude of marriage, the casting off of binding family ties, freedom to love, and, in the name of eugenics, the destruction of crippled and diseased children. But this *a priori* philosophy, taking no account of what Butti would call "human weakness", is not well received. Serchi's "immorality" is execrated, he is forced to quit the city. In the process of proselyting, he has converted a young girl, who has given herself to him, and while he is away on a tour of propaganda, she gives birth to a child, hideously deformed. Having been badly received everywhere on his tour, Serchi returns in discouragement, to be confronted by his own child, a monster. All his Utopian theories break down. The mother of his child demands that he surrender his dream and marry her, the better to assist in the inglorious task of caring for their wretched offspring. Defeated and discredited, with death in his heart, he consents.

Butti begs the question and avoids the issue he has tried to raise by making Serchi not a sound scientist, but a fool and a cruel idealist, setting him up as a puppet to be knocked over; his statement of the case is unconvincing, because he has not made his revolutionary a sane man.

The Whirlpool (*Il vortice*) (1894) is a pure tragedy rather than a thesis drama, a study of the baseness of the protagonist, a good-natured weakling who falls from abyss to abyss of ignominy, financial and personal.

In the *End of an Ideal* (*La fine d'un ideale*) (1898) he returns to the discussion of contemporary interests, this time the feminist movement and women's rights. In true Italian fashion, Butti has missed completely the

significance of the demand for emancipation of half the race, mistaking woman's demand for justice and freedom for a desire for license. There is no alternative in his mind between marriage for eternity and promiscuity. Woman to the Latin has, up till the last ten years, remained the inferior sex, needing support and protection and authority to save her from her very self. Pure as she is, with a standard of purity set by the man, she is fair game for the pursuit of any libertine. Unable to reason and act for herself, she gains her ends by guile, deceit, and coquetry. There has been among them no conception of woman as man's equal and companion, respected and feared as such, or of the honorable and open friendship of men and women, the ideal the northern people have set up. To the Latin, freedom for women means license. The contemporary and still current misinterpretation of Ibsen's *The Doll's House*, for example, by French and Italian critics, is astonishing. Nora, to them, is merely the ménagère who capriciously deserts her duty, her husband and children, to run wild. They cannot understand the imperious revolt of her individuality against the futility and degradation of her existence.

In the next three plays Butti produced a trilogy — *The Atheists*. Here lies the kernel of his work, — the discussion of religious and philosophical problems in dramatic form. Here he may be said to have distilled the essence, yes, the very quintessence, of his thought. One of his critics says of him, "'Marriage,' says he, 'is a delusion,' but he makes things even worse. Free love is also a delusion. So is celibacy; so are the pursuit of pleasure, the search for health, enjoyment of money, the enthusiasms of social reform and revolution, science, free thought.

Butti even affirms with stolid earnestness in *Lucifero* that a middle-class girl who leaves home to earn a living must necessarily go to the dogs." *The Race for Pleasure* (*La corsa al piacere*) (1900), *Lucifero* (1900), and *The Tempest* (*La tempesta*) (1901) all embody this sceptical view of life.

Aldo Rigliardi, the hero of *The Race for Pleasure*, reasons to himself in this fashion: "All is vanity; we are assured of nothing in this world. Science cannot prove an aim for existence, or the value of morality. The only certainty is pleasure. *Gaudeamus igitur*." The greatest of pleasures is love, and Rigliardi gives himself with unreserved ardor to its pursuit. In the end at the death of his mother, the one being he really loved, Rigliardi is smitten with terrible remorse, the inevitable logical end of *The Race for Pleasure*.

The theme of *Lucifer* is more strictly religious. Atheism, or, rather, agnosticism, says Butti, cannot satisfy simpler souls, cannot satisfy the great souls under the strain of sorrow. The "consolations of religion" is a phrase fraught with meaning.

Lucifer is the nickname of an ex-priest, who has become a complete sceptic, and is now a professor in a small provincial university. His son, his *magnum opus*, he has reared in strict accordance with the latest scientifico-atheistical ideas. He has not even been baptized, which indicates a negation of appalling significance in his world. Yet he marries, by civil ceremony, the daughter of a fervent Catholic, and after a time the young wife is suddenly stricken with a mortal malady. The young man, having no spiritual prop to lean upon, and witnessing the spectacle of his wife's comfort at the hands of an old priest he has induced his father to admit into the house,

feels a great misgiving growing in his mind. He questions his father, who can give him no satisfying answer. Finally, when the priest announces to him that his wife is dead, he gives in and takes refuge in the arms of the venerable father; religion can console him. Even his father, the unbeliever, is shaken. "Who knows! Who knows!" he murmurs, as the curtain goes down.

This play is an example of Butti's trick of speaking on both sides; if agnosticism has no satisfactory answer to the difficult question of the aim and purpose of existence, if Lucifer is not a constructive thinker, nevertheless, the Catholic who is set in opposition to him is a bigot, whose prejudice leads him to the cruelty of refusing to see his dying daughter. Butti, himself, apparently does not know if there be a middle ground between belief and disbelief. At least this play gives no hint of such a ground.

The remaining member of the *Atheist* trilogy, *The Tempest*, is an anti-socialist tract. Granted Butti's premises and conclusion, he proves that the idea of a community proceeding without the use of force, founded on pure good-will of the governed, is a Utopian dream, and, at the same time, that violence and revolution by force of arms do not advance humanity one jot, — a two-sided thesis which it would be difficult to maintain in the face of history.

Flames in the Dark (*Fiamme nell'ombra*) (1904) is Butti's masterpiece. In this he undertakes to prove or to disprove nothing, and is free, therefore, to study and present his characters as a dramatist, and he has succeeded in producing one of the gems of the modern stage.

The specimen he takes for special observation is the soul of an old priest, gentle, idealistic, religious. He is

ambitious to gain a bishopric, and is the logical candidate for the place, but the misconduct of his sister prevents its coming to him. He waits and is again on the point of realizing his ambition, when the sister returns to live with him, ostensibly penitent over her misconduct. But terrible disillusionments are in store for him. He again fails to get the appointment and finds that the wretched woman had, during her absence, lived, not with one man, as he had supposed, but had become a prostitute; at this very moment she is conducting an amour far from innocent with a doctor of the village where they live. After a bitter struggle the better element in the old man triumphs and he resolves to devote his life to redeeming this lost soul, his sister, giving up his ambitions and hopes. He takes her away with him to a little mountain village. "We can go off there," he says, "and learn what neither of us ever knew, to sacrifice ourselves — there is no other redemption, no other truth."

Don Antonio, the priest, stands forth as Butti's most original and satisfactory creation. His hopes, his fears, his angers, his renunciations, the emergence of his real self under the stress of circumstances, are logical and clear. The conclusion as to the value of self-abnegation has the true Ibsenite ring of lofty rebellion against material standards. *Flames in the Dark* has a quality of moral superiority and a note of hope rare in Butti. The *milieu*, a country presbytery, an uncommon one, is painted with good effect, the minor characters silhouetted clearly, and one feels through the whole play that artistic and logical inevitableness that marks the great plays.

The more recent dramas cannot be said to differ in any essential respect from the earlier ones. The best of

them are: *In the Land of Fortune* (*Nel paese della fortuna*) (1910), a hectic drama of gambling, illicit love, and suicide; *Ever Thus* (*Sempre così*) (1911), a return to the discussion of feminism; *Poetic Intermezzo* (*Intermezzo poetico*) (1913), and *Seductions* (*Le seduzione*) (1913), written in collaboration with Anastasi Gugliemo. A serious play, half drama, half comedy, is his recent *The Invisible Sun* (*Il sole invisibile*) (1913). The Invisible Sun is the love which Irene Donic, a devoted wife and mother, suddenly feels for a famous pianist, old enough to be her father. Though she has an adoring husband and a child, she declares her love to him and inflames him with her ardor. But he, a sensible and honest man, feels that she cannot abandon all her ties and follow him to a life of uncertainty and solicitude. He insists to her that they renounce their dream of happiness, and like sensible people go their different ways.

The Castle of Dreams (*Il castello del sogno*) (1910) is its author's only verse play, and, in a sense, his favorite child, — the sickly one of the brood. It is unfitted for stage production, but Butti was assiduous in reading it aloud. It is in the nature of an allegory in which he tries to prove the irresistible power of reality, life, strife, and love, over the dream, which is inertia.

His few comedies show a spirit of genuine fun. At times a bit over-satirical, nevertheless they are too good to warrant the neglect to which they have fallen heir. *The Giant and the Pygmies* (*Il gigante ei pigmei*) (1903) is not in his best manner. It was badly received at its première in Milan because it was said that Butti was aiming a shaft at the greatest and noblest of his contemporaries, the poet, Leopardi. The giant, the superman,

by a strange play of events, becomes in practical life the victim of the pygmies, the small souls, who surround him. Even his wife deceives him with the lowest and most despicable of the pygmies. *All for Nothing* (*Tutto per nulla*) (1906) is called *commedia drammatica*, but *The Cuckoo* (*Il Cucolo*) (1907) "is a jewel of wit and grace, of satire, suffused with a delicate tint of that melancholy which rises from regret for fleeting existence. It reads like a story in dialogue of exquisite workmanship."

Butti was never financially successful. He calls himself *poveretto*, and says, "But alas! I am not lucky, and if Fortune has not been unfaithful to me, it is because she was never my companion." His plays have nearly all aroused an interest, more or less polemic, — *Utopia*, *The Giant and the Pygmies* most of all, and in lesser degree *Lucifer* and the *End of an Ideal*. He has the great merit of stimulating thought. But his ideas are not for the present generation. He writes of himself, "I doubt progress; atheistic and socialistic systems seem grotesque to me or harmful, but I must grant that our adversaries have on their side the weight of numbers, strength, and the future, while I myself am but a remnant of the past, of that doomed past which will arise no more." He demands a return to Catholic faith as an escape from the abyss of unbelief; he affirms the excellence of the present-day organization of the family and of society; he is interested, rather, in the preservation of the *status quo* than in amelioration.

Critics are agreed in praising Butti's technical expertness in dramatization. The plays read almost as well as they act. He has undoubtedly a *coup d'œil* for dramatic situation and effect. He excels in *genre* painting — in bits

like the presbytery of *Flames in the Dark;* the house of the atheist professor in *Lucifer;* the bourgeois interior of *The Race for Pleasure.* The action never slows down, never, for all its complexity, becomes muddy; it is varied and kept vivid by the introduction of new and interesting episodes, and even the gloomiest of the plays, and most of them are gloomy, sparkle with clever bits of dialogue.

The plays of Antonio Fogazzaro (1842–1911) call for mention mainly because of the authority lent them by their author's fame in the novel. The three plays in the volume *Scene* were written by way of experiment at the end of Fogazzaro's life, partly through a natural desire to try his hand at a new form, partly at the instigation of Giuseppe Giacosa. The three *Scene* are, *The Red Carnation* (*Il garofola rosso*), written in the dialect of Vicenza; *The Masked Portrait* (*Il ratratto mascherato*), and *Nadejde.* Of these, the second is the best, as savoring least of its author's characteristic sentimentality. *The Red Carnation* is a comedy of manners in the style of Goldoni and Gallina. In *The Masked Portrait,* a young widow, noble of soul and pure, receives definite proofs of her dead husband's infidelity to her, but stifles in herself the involuntary movement of indignation and disgust which is about to stain her widow's sorrow. *Nadejde* is a real Fogazzarian theme, the power of the simple, wholesome philosophy of a young and innocent country girl over the degenerate opportunism of the super-civilized.

Fogazzaro's plays are better read than acted. They are delicate, emotional, poetic, and profound, written in impeccable style. It is to be regretted that their author did not turn earlier and oftener to the drama.

The brothers Antona-Traversi, Camillo and Giannino, claim our attention as having produced an astonishing body of drama. They have an additional interest of belonging to a different class of society and, therefore, presenting a different point of view from any of the writers that have been studied. They are the sons of the wealthiest landed proprietor in Lombardy, who has been a member of Parliament for many sessions, and they are in consequence vitally in touch with the aristocratic and cultured world. D'Annunzio is the only other Italian dramatist who moves in these social circles. The other playwrights, Giacosa, Verga, Praga, and Butti, are bourgeois to their finger tips; only Rovetta may be said to have had a social experience similar to that of the Antona-Traversis.

Camillo Antona-Traversi, the elder of the brothers, was born in 1857, and after receiving a fine training in his home city, Milan, went to the University of Naples. He entered the teaching profession immediately, and has made himself a name as a literary investigator, having written illuminating commentaries on Metastasio, Ugo Foscolo, Leopardi, Carducci, and others. He was for years professor of literature in the Military College at Rome, and in other *Licei*. His active scholarly life has left him time, however, for the avocation of letters. His list of plays is long; more could not be asked of a man who devoted his whole time to dramatic composition. At present, Camillo Antona-Traversi lives in Paris, where he is correspondent for several important Italian journals. He continues to write plays, which are often produced in the French Capital before they appear in Italy. He is one of the populous colony of Gallicised Italian authors.

C. Antona-Traversi's first play, *Albert's Marriage* (*Il matrimonio d'Alberto*) (1881), a trifle which is still seen occasionally in the repertory of good companies as a curtain-raiser, is an innocuous bit of romanticism. A young viveur, Albert, returning to his native city after years of absence, falls in love again with his childhood friend, the pure and innocent Irene, who, while he was away, had made him the hero of her girlish dreams.

After several other dramas, *George's Sacrifice* (*Il Sacraficio di Giorgio*) (1886); *Period and a New Line!* (*Punto e da capo*) (1887); *Nora's Daughter* (*La figlia di Nora*) (1889), and *Swallows or Chaffinches* (*Tordi o fringuelli*) (1890), which he wrote under a pseudonym, there came the best of all his plays, as well as the most popular, *The Rozeno Family* (*Le Rozeno*) (1891).

It is difficult at this distance of time and temperament to explain the sensation which *The Rozeno Family* caused on its first appearance. It is a good play, but neither startlingly new nor striking. It applies the photographic method of Giacosa's *Sad Loves* to an entirely disreputable family. At the time, its unflinching portrayal of low life seemed unduly detailed or unduly sordid, and it was declined by manager after manager. It remained for some time in the desk of its author, but at last, in 1891 through the agency of the dramatist, Luigi Suñer, it was brought out by Cesare Rossi. Antona-Traversi woke next day to find his play the subject of a violent controversy; in which reams of paper were spoiled and gallons of ink shed. He was accused of all the literary and many of the moral crimes in the calendar; like Giacosa and Henri Becque before him, of immorality, of degraded taste, of lying, of a hundred other flagrant things.

Antona-Traversi says that the subject of *The Rozeno Family* was chosen by him to silence the criticism he had received apropos of *Nora's Daughter*. They had said, "It's too ingenuous; too good." So Antona-Traversi said to himself, "Very well! I'll give the comedy they want. It will be all about loose women and prostitutes."

He attempts no solution of a social problem, he has no sociological *arrière pensée*, but merely presents in its stark naked truth a class of society and those who move in it. *The Rozeno Family* is quite free from a certain pedantry which mars others of his works.

He has never done anything else as good as this play, though in the twenty-seven years that have elapsed since its production he has given out about twenty-five, some of which must be mentioned. *Dance Macabre* (*Danza macabra*) (1893) shows how the perversity and idleness of the gilded youth make them merely a prey of the practical bourgeoisie; *The Children* (*I Fanciulli*) (1894) shows a typically Italian manner of discussing and regarding economic problems, making social questions matters of sentiment. The spectator is called upon to feel sorry for the poor and the oppressed and then — do nothing. It exhibits the Italian reaction from misery, — pity, not indignation.

With his *Earth or Fire* (*Terra o fuoco*) (1896), Antona-Traversi invades the territory exploited by Butti, — the struggle between religion and unbelief. In this case, the play finds its problem in the conflict of conjugal love with dogmatic faith.

At the heart of this little play (it is of only one act) lies a situation that it is very necessary to understand if

one is to appreciate certain important aspects of modern Italian literature, — those that reflect the intellectual life of the country. This situation is concerned with the national and popular attitude toward questions of religion. The Italians have been Roman Catholics for so many centuries that the Church's ritual and teaching have entered into their very bones. To an Italian, religion means Catholicism, and to be unecclesiastical is to be irreligious. Of course, there are Protestant believers in Italy, but they are not numerous enough to weigh in the typical community. The world is, therefore, divided into two camps —Catholics and non-Catholics, or unbelievers. Religion is the sum of the teaching, the ritual, the tradition, the authority, the prerogative, the dogma of the Church, not a personal matter, or a matter of social intercourse. The personal and social problems and responsibilities which confront society outside the Church are ignored or denied by the Church and the devout. There has been, of course, a rationalistic movement in modern Italy so influential that belief and unbelief have been confronted in every human relation. Science and criticism, with their liberating vistas, have made great strides. But Modernism has never recovered from the blow dealt it by Pius X in the Encyclical *Pascendi*. The Catholic Church stands where it stood; and the basis of Italian thought is dogma — it departs from dogma or it returns to dogma. Italy is Catholic in its socialism, Catholic in its atheism, Catholic in its Protestantism. One must bear these things in mind if he is to understand the fire and passion that informs a conflict between unbelief and faith.

To return to Camillo Antona-Traversi, — his next play was a satiric comedy, a contrast to his usual serious,

not to say heavy manner. *The Parasites* (*I Parissiti*) (1899) is a humorous study of those social leaders who exist on the organization of charity enterprises, and is a fine satiric study of the type of man whose methods of business are legal but not honest, and a presentation of the wretchedness that such a person is bound to cause to those near him.

French influence is evident in the series of one-act "shockers" contained in the volume, *Atti Unici: Babbo Gournas* (1906); *In Bordata* (1908); *The Acquitted Man* (*L'Assolto*) (1906), and *Calvary* (*Calvario*) (1908). These are the Italian Grand Guignol; they are meant to produce in the spectator only physical horror and fear, disgust and revolt. *Calvary*, for example, is a long-drawn-out and detailed study of an infanticide. In *In Bordata*, a street-walker entertains her own drunken son, whom she recognizes only after she has robbed him and he has stabbed her, not knowing who she is.

Since 1908, C. Antona-Traversi has put out a matter of fifteen or twenty plays. Historical dramas, like *Strozzino* (1907), and *The Last Days of Goffredo Mameli* (*Gli ultimi giorni di Goffredo Mameli*) (1916), where he shows the death bed of the young Garibaldian poet. Domestic dramas, like *Mother* (*Madre*) (1912); *In Pace* (1912); *The Child's Prayer* (*La prighiera della bimba*) (1913); *The Stone Tower* (*La torre di pietra*) (1913); *The Gag* (*Il Bavaglio*) (1914); *After 44 Years* (*Dopo 44 anni*) (1915), and, finally, the Corsican drama, *Don Mattéo* (1917), and a *Stabat Mater* (1917). Many of these have been written in collaboration with other writers. There is no space to mention all the titles of his formidable list.

Camillo Antona-Traversi is a serious thinker, gifted

with insight and with a knack of depicting swift and subtle play of emotion. Slightly pedantic, he represents the serious movement in the modern drama, concerning himself however with contemporary life not as reformer but as observer.

Giannino Antona-Traversi has been as little influenced by foreign writers as any author of his generation. He is cosmopolitan in a sense, but at the same time purely indigenous in his Italianism. While his brother Camillo, Giacosa, Rovetta, Butti, Praga, *e tutti quanti*, were finding in France and Scandinavia their guiding stars, Giannino Antona-Traversi could speak thus of his own efforts: "I am trying to bring back Italian comedy to its glorious tradition. I should like to see it become again gay, simple, smiling, gently ironic, supple, and light." This playwright would, then, discard foreign seriousness and heaviness, would, as a self-appointed task, revive the gentle art of Goldoni, of Torelli, and Gallina, of the dialect writer, Bersezio; would, in a word, bring comedy back to its true function, castigating, perhaps, but castigating by amusing.

Born in 1861, Giannino passed his youth in the usual pursuits of the callow man about town, contracting debts which his father paid, prosecuting amours, acquiring as a by-product a deep knowledge of the *beau-monde*, the aristocratic circles of Milan. Though at this epoch his writing was confined to scribbling billets-doux and signing his name to notes, he had his wits about him and was observing, experiencing, jotting down in his memory the things he writes about later on. One fine day, Giannino's father refused to settle any more of his debts, and the young man, thrown on his own resources, began breeding

silkworms, and was making some headway when his father demanded rent for the farm where he was conducting his business. Giannino then renounced his industrial ambitions and returned to Milan to become a professional prestidigitateur. Here, again, he was making headway when again his father, a noble of the old school, ashamed of his son's profession, showed him the door. Traversi moved bag and baggage to a near-by hotel and set up as dramatic writer. He had many friends, men and women, in the theatre, and one of these, a prominent actress, divining talent in him, asked him to write her a *saynète* for her benefit performance. This playlet, *The Morning After*, was an immediate success.

A somewhat scandalous tale was going the rounds of Milanese society at the time, and this Traversi took, put it into dialogue, seasoned it with witty sayings and *bons mots*, and gave it to the world as *The Morning After* (*La Mattina dopo*) (1898). A certain lady, getting rid of her husband under pretext of a headache, goes alone to a ball, there to meet her friend and go out with him. Her husband has his suspicions. The next morning, having learned of an indiscretion of her lord and master, the lady turns the tables on him, the accused becomes the accuser, and honor is safe.

In this, his first play, slight though it be, Traversi found himself. He never fumbled for his technic; he applies the Verist formula, not, as did Verga, to the study of the peasantry, but to a group in high society. He knew his world from having lived in it; he was endowed with a rich vein of satire and instinctively took to writing Verist comedy. He represents with extraordinary truth and vivacity the *milieu* he has chosen, that of the social

level somewhat ironically called "high class", in a way calculated to appeal instantaneously to the audiences of the Lombard capital.

Through vanity (*Per Vanità*) (1892) is another short sketch in the same tone and similar vein. It is woven out of nothing, like one of the exquisite scenes of Marivaux or De Musset, a cobweb in delicacy and filminess.

Traversi has written two kinds of plays and it is convenient to observe this natural division of his work:

First, there are one-act plays, in which he excels, — polished, witty, with slender threads of plot; and, second, plays in more than one act, more pretentious, more elaborate in every way. Some of them are genuine comedies of manners, but on the whole they are not so well done as the shorter ones. His inspiration is brief and episodic; he is successful only when he does not force his talent, which is best suited to short, not too serious plays.

There is an opportunity in Italy for one-act plays that exists nowhere else. It is very rare for a dramatic performance to consist of one play only; there are practically always two, a curtain-raiser and the *pièce de résistance*. In fact, it is not uncommon to give whole evenings of one-act plays alone, — the *Teatri a sezioni* are spreading rapidly. Consequently, dramatic authors do not regard the short play as apprentice work, or as a thing of little worth. On the contrary, it is quite as worthy as its bulkier kindred, quite as actable, quite as carefully written.

Two of Traversi's short plays have been noted already. Any selection of Traversi's short plays should certainly include *The Bracelet*, *The First Time*, *The Only Excuse*, and *The Rocket*. Other one-act plays are *Simple Soul* (*Anima*

semplice); *Hony soit qui mal y pense; The Last Hope* (*L' Ultima spese*), and *The Coat of Marten-fur* (*La Pelliccia di martora*).

The list of plays in more than one act is long, but a judicious selection will serve to give an idea of the whole body. *The Coquette* (*La Civetta*) (1894) betrays a bitter and enduring hatred against the idle and corrupt men and women of his class. The humorist disappears before the satirist. *The Coquette* is in many respects the best thing Traversi has done. It is a character study of the Countess Julia Racanate, the coquette, who delights in exciting the desire of the men she meets, leading them on to the very threshold of the alcove, and then slamming the door in their faces. She has always succeeded in escaping unscathed. But once she practices her art on a young sculptor, Carlo Viti, a bearded, virile, fearless young animal, who, in a moment of uncontrollable passion, bends her to his will by force. She is furious; she tries every means to revenge herself, but is helpless in the face of his strength and indifference. She has to endure defeat and take warning from the terrible lesson she has had. A scabrous subject! But Traversi has with great tact and delicacy avoided all suggestiveness or vulgarity. *The Coquette* is a lifelike figure, drawn evidently from a model, and is a powerful indictment of the woman of the world as Traversi knew her. The sculptor is one of the two virile and manly figures in the whole list of dramas. He is sincere in his love and in his life. If he forces Julia, it is at her own invitation. *The Coquette* exhibits a new side of Traversi — the moralist. Not that he appeals in the name of a higher order of things for a condemnation of his heroine, but he exposes with a pitiless

scalpel all her vices — after all the most effective method of reform available to drama.

The Husband's School (*La Scuola del marito*) (1898) is even more disagreeable in subject-matter than *The Coquette*, and is unrelieved by Traversi's usual brilliancy. But it had a great success when played in Paris by the Novelli, because it was convincing. It reminds one of Brieux, — the Brieux of *The Three Daughters of M. Dupont* and *Damaged Goods*. The depravity, the scepticism, the refinement of sensuality, the enervation of fatigue which possess the rich and idle of our time are hurrying them to dissolution and ruin. This is Traversi's general thesis. In particular, he studies a complex aspect of the relation between husband and wife.

The Ascent of Olympus (*La scalata del' Olimpo*) (1899) returns to a time-worn theme, that of the bourgeois in society. Like Molière and Goldoni, Traversi is amused at the spectacle of the wealthy man of plain surroundings and education trying to hobnob with those he considers to be his social betters. Unlike his great predecessors, however, Traversi takes the part of the bourgeois, pities and defends him.

The Friend (*L'Amica*) (1900) treats an old theme and one always popular with the Latins, — the impossibility of a friendship between a man and a woman. *The Happiest Days* (*I Giorni più lieti*) (1903) are those just preceding the marriage of a young couple. They are loving and eager to be united. But such a number of things come up: etiquette, family disputes, quarrels over the marriage contract, matters of precedence, prejudices, irritation upon irritation into which the young couple are dragged. They dispute, they wrangle, and finally, when they have

straightened out all their difficulties, comes the news that a cousin of the bride's father is about to die, and the wedding must be postponed. The "happiest days" continue!

In 1905 came *The Fidelity of Husbands* (*La fedeltà dei mariti*); in 1907 *Worldly Charity* (*Carità mondana*), in which is pilloried the prosecution of charitable work by the nobility as a cloak for amorous intrigue; *An Honest Wife* (*Una moglie onesta*) (1907) presents in the protagonist a cold, calculating, egotistical sensualist, pursuing gratification regardless of those who are injured; *Martyrs to Work* (*Martiri del lavoro*) (1909) are those young married people who find no time to give to each other, so much is their time occupied with outside "duties", benefit societies, meetings, the club, hunting parties, premières, and all the rest.

The Wedding Journey (*Viaggio di nozze*) (1910) is of the old well-made shocker variety, turned out for the commercial theatre. A young couple have given up their wedding journey under strange circumstances and returned to the bride's parents. There is some terrible secret between them. The father of the girl learns that the son-in-law has been conducting an affair with a certain widow, and assumes that to be the trouble; but as a matter of fact the young man has broken with this woman. When the girl at last commits suicide, the secret comes out; she has had a lover and has killed herself rather than confess her shame to her father. The play had considerable vogue in Italy and even in Austria when it was played in the Viennese Burg Theatre.

The Mother (*La Madre*) (1911), considered by some critics to be his best play, *The Screen* (*Il Parvento*) (1914),

The Great Shadow (*La grande ombra*) (1915), and *The Survivor* (*Il sopravissuto*) (1916) are Giannino Antona-Traversi's latest dramas.

Antona-Traversi, as has already been said, applies the Verist methods to the study of aristocratic circles in the Italian capital. The main, almost the sole, preoccupation of the idle rich and the social parasites is "L'amore", "corrupt and corrupting; which has all the exquisiteness and perversity of corruption." Love is the great game which you play to keep from being bored to death. It is coquetry, ambition, avidity of pleasure, sensuality, the occupation of idle hours. It may be innocent flirtation, it may be adultery; it is anything but the great ennobling passion of stout hearts. In all the plays, there are only two persons who really love, and neither of them belongs to the class Traversi is attacking — they are Viti of *The Coquette*, a sculptor, and Raimondo of *The Friend*, an explorer.

But Traversi does not feel the sickness of soul in the presence of this corruption that an Ibsen would feel; he is too well-bred for that and too Italian. Bitterness and irony are as far from him as homiletics and pedantry. As gentleman, he perceives the foibles of his contemporaries, but he goes into no vulgar polemics; he knows how to bow before the weaknesses and shames of society "incarnated as they are by beautiful, seductive, delicious ladies and elegant gentlemen, — only his bow is a trifle too ostentatious —"; he does not preach, he mocks.

Sir Arthur Pinero is notorious in the English theatre for his "wise friend", who invariably appears at the crucial point with the inevitable good advice, patting some one

on the back, escaping the platitudinous only by a hair's-breadth if he avoids it at all. In Giannino Antona-Traversi's plays, he is duplicated; he is Ludovico in *The First Time*, Uberto in *The Coquette*, the poverty-stricken but unashamed nobleman, Della Volpe, in *The Ascent of Olympus*. These men represent, as do Pinero's "wise friends", the author, and from their lips we may gather his philosophy of life, a sort of mundane opportunism. He is not a constructive thinker, but he does see some faults of the world he lives in and holds them up to ridicule. Common sense is his standard of measuring conduct — the common sense which has come of disillusionment. Traversi has not the balance of the true philosopher; he displays rather the detachment of the true comedian stiffened a bit by the indifference of the sceptic.

Antona-Traversi's *bons mots* enjoy a vogue in Italy comparable with that of Oscar Wilde's in England or Henri Becque's in France; it would be possible to cite many that are current. His plays so sparkle and scintillate with wit that they could easily be carried by the impetus of this alone. The characters toss back and forth epigrams, clever riposts of which some are funny, some vulgar, none dull. It is a display of mental fireworks. A great French writer used to say he had to "extinguish" all his phrases. Traversi does just the contrary: he lights them up. His style is all his own, shimmering, cobwebby, atmospheric in texture. He has more than once been compared with Marivaux.

As a thinking man, Traversi lacks precisely what his far greater contemporary, D'Annunzio, lacks, — humanity. It is his most serious fault that he is so occupied with setting before us aristocrats, idlers and pleasure-

seekers as such that he forgets to make them men and women. They spread themselves peacock-fashion before the spectator, they turn around and about, showing all their sides, but never perform an action or utter a word that shows them as men and women. The play takes on a cold if bright intellectual atmosphere, and one is conscious that the strings are being pulled and the figures manipulated by the author.

Several other writers may be roughly classed with Butti and the brothers Antona-Traversi as among the realists. Giuseppe Baffico, the journalist and critic, attempted the theatre with success in his *The Deserters* (*I Desertori*) (1898), a study of the artistic temperament. Other plays of his are *Broken Wing* (*Ala ferita*) (1898), an exquisite idyl; *Other People's Fault* (*Le colpa degli altri*) (1900); *On the Sill* (*Sulla Soglia*) (1902); and more recently, *The Enemy* (*Il Nemico*). Alfred Oriani (1852–1909) has written *Unconquerable* (*Invincible*) on the Hamlet motive and *Jack's Daughter* (*La Figlia di Gianni*), a drama of the working classes. Gerolamo Aurico Nani has written a *Mal' occhio*.

The names of the writers of plays realistic in intention is, of course, legion, but the ones named are, it seems, those destined to longer life than the others. To the most eminent of them all, so prominent that he stands definitely apart, a special study must be given. This preëminent realist in drama is Roberto Bracco.

CHAPTER VI

Roberto Bracco

Roberto Bracco is perhaps the most widely and the most favorably known dramatist in the Italy of to-day. This is entirely consistent with the statement that as a literary artist his reputation cannot approach that of D'Annunzio; and is not inconsistent with the statement that in verse plays he is being pushed hard by Sem Benelli, whose fame is steadily augmenting. It is in prose drama — the actable drama of the theatre — that Bracco has made his success, a success not achieved by any other dramatist since Giacosa.

It should go without saying in Bracco's case — since it has to be said of every dramatist of the present era — that he learned much of technic from Ibsen and from the great Frenchmen, Dumas *fils*, Porto-Riche, Becque and De Curel; yet to all he may have learned from them he adds these differentiating elements, — the flavor of Italian culture and the imprint of his own salient personality. His period of pupilage was short; like Ibsen he saw quickly and keenly the social needs and weaknesses of his native land, the narrowing, hampering effect of convention; the oppression of women by the social code; the injustice in the relation of employer and employed. He has no Utopia to offer; he does not even indicate by contrast the higher things toward which men should be led; such is not the way of the Italian temperament, whose more

or less tacit creed is something like this: Man is to be pitied rather than cured; he is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward; we are all damned; let us, then, be good to one another and understand all one another's reasons for being damned. This creed Bracco shares with many of his compatriots, literary and lay.

Roberto Bracco was born in Naples in 1862 and is still living and writing. He grew up in Naples, obtaining his education there, and at the age of seventeen was a clerk in the Customs. In spite of this uncongenial employment his gift for letters declared itself, and he began to write, publishing poems and sketches in the journals of Naples, writing several one-act curtain-raisers for contemporary actors, serving as dramatic critic for the newspaper on which he was employed.

These little *saynètes* are quite obviously the work of a very young dramatist, but they exhibit a robust dramatic talent and a very genuine sense of fun. In *Do Not Unto Others* (*Non fare ad altri*) (1886), in *He, Her, He!* (*Lui, Lei, Lui!*) (1887), in *A Traveling Adventure* (*Un Avventura di viaggio* (1887) one can detect the preliminary and practicing flourishes of a master preparing for his art.

In the plays that he wrote during the years 1886–1893, Bracco was adding to his native gift those other things so essential in the dramatist's equipment — habits of observation, knowledge of many sciences as well as of literary technic and practical stagecraft. In one of these plays *A Woman* (*Una Donna*) (1892), Bracco declared his adherence to the new "theatre of ideas." He takes the old neo-romantic theme of the courtesan reformed by love, so familiar as the theme of Dumas *fils*' *La Dame aux Camélias*.

The *théâtre d'idées* has not easily become acclimatized in Italy. Italians felt when this genre appeared, and they still feel, that the *pièce à thèse* has no legitimate place in the playhouse. Upon the publication of these first plays of Bracco's, Luigi Capuana wrote to him: "Why do you not content yourself with interesting and diverting the public? Why do you insist on trying to teach? Dramatic art is one thing; sociology, philosophy, and science are other things." But Bracco is quite prepared to answer these questions. He declares, in a courteous but firm reply, that sociology, philosophy, and science can very well furnish the subject-matter for drama, provided only the dramatist knows enough of his trade to give to these ideas an interesting and diverting form. So far as the interest and diversion go, it is not a matter so much of what the playwright is saying as how he is saying it; the dramatist may as well say things that are worth saying in an interesting way as things that are not worth saying; and he cites as examples and justifications Aristophanes, Shakespeare and Ibsen.

Unlike Marguerite Gautier, transformed by the love of a man, Clelia, the heroine of *A Woman*, is transfigured by maternity, to the point of sacrificing her life and happiness to her child.

Bracco's literary habits and his fertile imagination betray him into certain incongruities of detail. We feel that no change in poor Clelia's soul could have produced the change of speech registered, for example, in this: "What is my son to me? I cannot express it in words. I am sure, however, that from the very first moment of my motherhood I felt that it was absorbing me completely, and when he was born I could no longer live except

for him — except for — for the new sensation produced in me by this tiny being." The romanticists of course have the immemorial right to endow all their persons with eloquence; but should we not expect greater faithfulness from a realist?

Masks (*Maschere*) (1893) forsakes France for Norway, — indeed it is more "Ibsene" than anything Butti, the acknowledged Ibsenite, gave us, proposing an Ibsenite dilemma and offering an Ibsen solution. A husband, coming home unexpectedly after a long absence, finds that his wife has just committed suicide. A post-mortem examination reveals the fact that she is several months pregnant. He discovers that his own business partner is the partner of her shame; it then comes out that she had committed suicide in despair over her lover's approaching marriage. The wronged husband feels an instinctive savage joy in the thought that he will ruin the guilty man by denouncing him, by shaming him out of society and out of business. But soft! there is his daughter, the child of the disgraced dead woman, a little maid of fourteen years. He cannot shame her and darken her future! He summons the guilty man and says to him, "The infamy that you two did unites us forever. We must put on our masks and continue to live as before. And now the comedy begins!" *Masks* unites the grim tragic terror of the North with the burning passion of Naples.

The nature of Bracco's plays invites a study of them in groups rather than in chronological order. They fall naturally into four classes, as distinct as the work of a modern realistic dramatist can be, — comedies, plays of social and economic problems, psychological plays, deal-

ing chiefly with the complexes of the feminine soul and with the suffering of women under social wrongs, and the pure tragedies, dramas of incurable suffering.

Bracco could never be characterized as a comic artist, though he has produced some dozen comedies. After the first few youthful sketches, his comedies may be regarded not as the outpouring of a gay spirit, but as the occasional diversions of a bitter soul primarily concerned with the sorrows of existence. His recent successful *Madame President* (*La Presidentessa*) (1915) displays his maturer comedy method. It was a novel adapted by Washington Borg for the stage. Like all his later comedies it teems with wit, with play on words, with irony and sarcasm, with those surface brilliancies which are often sharp and bitter, but never rich and genial. These plays are keen, satirical, caustic, concealing unplumbed depths of suffering. Leaving out the one-act trifles, the comedies are *The Unfaithful Woman* (*L'Infedele*) (1895); *The Triumph* (*Il trionfo*) (1895); *The End of Love* (*La fine dell' amore*) (1896); *The Bitter Fruit* (*Il frutto acerbo*) (1910) and *The Perfect Love* (*Il perfetto amore*) (1910).

The Unfaithful Woman was the play that established Bracco's reputation, and it has maintained its popularity ever since. It has been successfully given in Paris by Réjane and in America by Nazimova, when it was called *The Countess Coquette*. It is in the high-life tone of Giannino Antona-Traversi. The countess Clara has cajoled her husband into agreeing to a compact the terms of which are that no matter what she does he will not be jealous. She gathers about her, fortified by this promise, a host of admirers. She makes a rendezvous with one of these, known as the most unscrupulous of the group,

Gino Ricciardi. The scene at the apartments of this modern Don Juan is a masterpiece; Clara plumps herself down and says, "Well! here I am. Seduce me!" The expert Don Juan is baffled by the willingness of the victim; his technic requires sentiment, reluctance, weakness; the coming-on disposition of this worldly Rosalind makes him ridiculous. Here matters stand when — enter the husband! "I'm going to kill you," he whispers to her fiercely. "Not here," she whispers back, "it would not be polite. Wait till we get home." In the last act the husband and wife patch it up, and Ricciardi comes in just in time to hear the laughter of the reconciled pair in the next room. It is a delightful comedy through which, nevertheless, runs the strain of bitterness to be found in all his work. *The Unfaithful Woman* is never really unfaithful; she is too cynical and ennuyée for that — all possible lovers bore her. She returns to her husband because, as she tells him, "I have looked and looked for the right man and in spite of myself I've been obliged to choose you."

His other important comedy, *The Triumph*, savors of the same fatigued disillusionment. This play is Bracco's counter-thrust at the Norwegian and German ideal love, the platonic union of souls, the ideal of Hauptmann's terrible psychological tragedy *Lonely Lives*. In Hauptmann's play the philosopher Johannes Vockerat, married to a wife he feels is unworthy of him, finds true friendship and consolation in his pupil, Anna Mahr. They are soul-mates in a real sense. They give themselves over to philosophical discussion and to colloquies in which they reconstruct society, where their "sister souls" come into communion. They dream of a union higher and

nobler than marriage, "a new union between men and women, in which the sex element will no longer take the first place and in which animal will no longer be united to animal but rather human being to human being."

Lucio Seppi in *The Triumph* has exactly this idea. He feels this ideal love, he thinks, for a young woman, Nora, who has nursed him through a long illness. Nora shares his views, and the two live together in perfect purity; they have never even kissed; "My mouth has never deflowered her mouth," says Lucio. A good ecclesiastic, a believer in *la bonne loi naturelle*, proposing to cure them, invites them to spend a vacation with him in his mountain parish.

Here during the warm summer nights, with the perfume of the flowers in her nostrils, Nora hears the voices of Nature, and one languorous day she gives herself to the painter Giovanni, forgetting Lucio and the "emptiness of desire." In the atrocious pain that he feels at her defection Lucio discovers his real feeling, jealousy; little by little he comes not only to excuse but even to approve Nora. So thoroughly does he come to understand her conduct that he himself tries to make an assignation with the niece of the curé.

The play has been called "a witty long-nose made by voluptuous Naples at Puritan Christiania." We may well believe that it had some special inspiration because the general trend of Bracco's work is in the other direction,—toward idealism and continence rather than toward voluptuousness and license. His characters as a rule move in a loftier psychological sphere than do these persons of *The Triumph*.

These two are his best comedies; a word may how-

ever be said of *The End of Love* and *The Bitter Fruit.* In the former, the gallery of portraits is delicious and it echoes the peculiar disillusionment of *The Unfaithful Woman. The Bitter Fruit* is a character study of a woman who has a lover much younger than herself, — a mere youth.

Other comedies are *The Honorable Lover* (*Uno degli onesti*) (1900), played in New York; *Concealed Weapons* (*Ad arme corte*); and *Three* (an adaptation by Gilbert Cannan) also played in English.

The Right to Live (*Il Diritto di vivere*) (1900) is Bracco's only play on an economic question. He is not primarily a social thinker and seems to have little knowledge of the industrial questions of the day and little appreciation of their merits. Like most Latins he is more intimate with the individual than with the community; the field of affairs is foreign to him, and the drama he succeeds in producing is empty, scattered, discursive and to use the fatal word, tiresome. The characters are as ill-defined as the situations. The play does not "bite," but it is full of rhetorical diatribes against society, capital, the law, wealth and the family. It lacks convincing detail and those touches of actuality which might have made it interesting as a document in Italian culture history. Made on the model of *The Weavers* it lacks the force because it lacks the sincerity and first-hand knowledge of the German masterpiece.

To find Bracco at his best we must go on to the psychological play involving a personal problem. He is above all the student and the doctor, — the specialist in the feminine soul. Close follower as he is of the Northern masters, he realizes the anomaly of woman's place in

Italian society. The battle which in Scandinavia, America and England has already been fought and to some extent won, the war for just laws, for social equality of the sexes, is still to be fought in Italy. Bracco, bearing as he does the banner of individualism, insisting on the inviolability of the soul and the essential right to the determination of one's destiny, calls for these privileges for women. The protagonists of what are probably his most important plays are women who are either the victims of convention or rebels against it. Catherina Nemi in *Tragedies of the Soul* (*Tragedia dell' anima*) (1899) and Claudia di Montefranco of *Maternity* (*Maternità*) (1903) rebel against their destiny; Giulia Artunni of *Phantasms* (*I Fantasmi*) (1906) and Teresah Baldi of *The Hidden Spring* (*La Piccola fonte*) (1905) are passive victims. Life reduces itself essentially to a struggle between the sexes in which the woman is invariably the sufferer and the victim. Man is armed with all the rights of the law, and woman's only defense or weapon is her astuteness, her coquetry and her powers of seduction. If a woman is too great-souled or too honorable or too virtuous to resort to this means of making life tolerable, she is certain to perish, a sacrifice to the pleasure or the power of her oppressor.

Caterina in the first play has in a moment of inexplicable weakness given herself to a man she does not love. From this her sin come *The Tragedies of the Soul*, which are not one but three-fold, for not only she but the two men, her husband and her lover, are the tragic victims of circumstance and their own natures. Her transgression is only the spark which sets off a whole train of disastrous events and in which each situation arises inevitably and

inevitably gives rise to its successor. It is a fine psychological study of sin and expiation. There is a simplicity, a close-knit texture, a feeling of inexorableness about *Tragedies of the Soul* which impress us as do only the greatest works of art.

Claudia di Montefranco, the protagonist of *Maternity*, tries to save her unborn child from her unworthy husband by leaving him, so that she may bring up the baby herself. But tragic circumstances intervene. The child cannot be born, and rather than save her own life at the expense of his, she resolves that they shall die together. In the words of one of the characters, "She is the personification, powerful and radiant, of Maternity. There is centered in her wonderful monomania all the instincts, the rights, the aspirations, the passions, the jealousies and the divine cupidity of a hundred mothers, united in her alone." It is inevitable then, that she should suffer through this, her essential absorbing instinct. In this play Bracco fails to drive home his point. We are moved but not convinced. He rouses pity but not terror and for this reason *Maternity* fails of ultimate dramatic greatness.

Bracco has himself interpreted *The Hidden Spring* for us in a letter to the critic and novelist Matilda Serao, which is prefixed to the definitive edition of the play. Teresah herself is the Hidden Spring, the fount of life and inspiration for all around her. In particular she is indispensable to her husband, a fashionable poet, frequenter of salons, who never realizes what she has meant to him until, when he has driven her mad with his cruelty and neglect, he finds that his inspiration is dead. Bracco says, "You have written that the moral beauty of my work is en-

closed in this woman's soul. You have been able to see that around her press in harmony or antithesis all the other people of the drama." Though the play, as Bracco confesses, conveys a moral lesson, he has avoided the pitfall of the moralist, and has made his characters not mere abstract figures of vice and virtue, but beings of flesh and blood. The dialogue is swift and graceful, yet pointed. There is the utmost economy of means, yet all the *scènes à faire* are provided. *The Hidden Spring* shows Bracco at his best.

The fourth of the studies of women is *Phantasms*, whose heroine is Giulia Artunni. She is the wife of a famous professor who is dying of consumption. Though she has been a model wife, he is unreasoningly jealous of her, and even on his death bed makes her promise to remain true to him. After his death, though she loves another man and is loved by him, she cannot fulfil his desires and her own. Something holds her back — Phantasms — the memory of her husband, of the old life with him, of his jealousies and suspicions, the old habits and accustomed reactions that her married life had embedded in her soul too deep for extraction. The dead hand has never relaxed its grip; in death as in life her husband subjects her to himself.

These four plays constitute Bracco's most distinguished contribution to the world's great repertory of problem dramas and the real core of his dramatic work. He has written some pure tragedies that call for discussion. *Masks* has been mentioned, *Don Pietro Caruso* (1895) might be a chapter from Matilda Serao's *Ventre di Napoli*, so full is it of tragic reality. Don Caruso, a Neapolitan, a shyster lawyer, a hanger-on of the law courts, a go-

between for corrupt politicians, does all the dirty work for the local machine. He is a man better than his occupation, tragi-comic, "who keeps in his worst moments a kind of chivalric dignity, who possesses every courage in the face of every shame . . . but who cannot really work for his living." He has a daughter, the apple of his eye, a lovely creature, for whom he has made every effort; but in spite of his care she has fallen in love and has given herself to her lover, her father's employer, a young nobleman. When the father discovers the situation he goes to the seducer to make him marry the girl. But "One does not marry Don Pietro's daughter." The seducer offers the girl a sum of money and she, loving him devotedly, is willing to consent to any arrangement he proposes. Then the wretched father understands that he has nothing further to live for, the lost honor and happiness of his daughter having been his only hope and his only dream. He puts a revolver in his pocket and goes out, humming a bit of Verdi in his rich baritone. The peculiar charm and flavor of Naples in this little gem is entirely lost in this or any analysis. *Don Pietro Caruso* was played in New York in 1914.

Nights of Snow (*Notte di neve*) (1908) was also played recently in America. It is the tragedy of the woman who once fallen sinks to the utmost depths and is forced to drain the last drop in the cup of humiliation.

Of the longer plays of pure tragedy the best is *Lost in Darkness* (*Sperduti nel buio*) (1902), which contains some of Bracco's best work, particularly in the first and third acts. The scene is again Naples, the characters Neapolitans of the lower class. The play opens in a low café-concert where the drovers, artisans and poorer work-

men congregate. The music is furnished by a blind fiddler, Nunzio, a stepson of the proprietor. Into this den of iniquity wanders the beautiful orphan girl Paolina, she too one of the submerged, a waif who knows of herself only that she is the daughter of a wealthy father who abandoned her mother. Bracco knows his Naples, so that the scene in the café is life itself; the characters and types and the *bruyant* life of Naples by night are copied from actuality.

Presently Paolina, the waif, and Nunzio, the blind fiddler, strike up a friendship, and resolve to go away together. "Are you ugly, Paolina?" he asks. "Yes," she replies, "Ugly." He trembles with delight, for he feels that if she had been pretty she would the more easily fall into temptation and leave him.

The second act, a sort of ironic interlude, is in the house of the Duke of Vallenza, the father of Paolina. He is dying and wants to find his illegitimate daughter and provide for her. But he is circumvented by his mistress, Livia Blanchart, in whose hands he is as wax. She has no desire to help him, wanting only to keep him alive long enough to acquire his property, and when she has accomplished this she lets him die. As he lies moribund she issues invitations for a dinner party to celebrate her good fortune.

The last act returns to Paolina and Nunzio. They have been living together in perfect purity. But Nunzio fears for her. He asks her if she ever leaves him not to warn him, but only to blow out the candle before the image of the Virgin that he may know merely by missing the warmth of the little flame. Paolina has been tempted by a Megæra with the old-new argument: Why live in

poverty when she can have everything merely by the sale of her body. She gives way at last and while Nunzio is practicing a plaintive air on his violin she tiptoes in, dressed in finery which proclaims only too clearly her downfall. Silently crossing to the image, she blows out the candle and as silently tiptoes out again. The sorrowful melody goes on.

Like the hero of Björnsen's *Beyond Human Power*, Fiorenzo, the protagonist of *The Little Saint* (*Il piccolo santo*) (1908) has the power of performing cures — faith-cures, perhaps — which have earned him the title. His is a powerful mind given to mysticism. Disappointed in love he has turned with passionate fervor and singleness of heart to the work of the church, and in his little country parish is regarded as a saint. One man in particular, his servant, whose life he has saved, adores him.

To him come two people, his brother Giulio, a roué, and the girl Amita, daughter of his former love. He loves in her what he had loved in her mother and acquires great ascendancy over her. The two young people, Giulio and Amita, fall in love and marry. But Amita, under the influence of her teacher, the priest, cannot give herself entirely, and the young pair resolve to go away where she may be free of this ascetic influence. Don Fiorenzo is desperate, seeing in their leaving him the death of his new hopes and joys; their mere presence had given him happiness and he felt that he must be near to guard the girl against a possible return of his brother's old habits. The devoted servant is broken-hearted at his master's sorrow. The young pair start off, but have gone but a little way when a distant voice calls — "Help! Giulio has fallen over the cliff." The servant runs into

the room with a terrible sneer on his face. Don Fiorenzo divines what he has done. "Murderer!" he screams at the wretch. But the man casts himself at his master's feet. "It was for you — for you."

The analysis of Don Fiorenzo like the analysis of the women is masterly — his asceticism, his reborn hope, his adoration of his old love in Amita, his scorn of the dissolute brother to whom nevertheless he must give up his beloved Amita, the last terrible blow revealing to him all his worst impulses executed by his misguided devotee, — all these make of the priest a fine tragic figure.

One more serious play has been brought out since *The Little Saint — Not Even a Kiss* (*Nemmeno un bacio*) (1913) another story of illicit and unhappy love, which adds nothing to Braccio's reputation. He has written also a "dialogue in three acts", *The Perfect Love* (*Il perfetto amore*) (1910), a serious comedy and since 1914 four others *The International* (*L' Internazionale*) (1915) *The Distant Lover* (*L' amante lontano*) (1916) a Sicilian dialect piece *Consecrated Eyes* (*L' Uocchie cunzacrate*) (1916) and a war play *The Cradle* (*La Culla*) (1918).

A word most be given to a side of Bracco's work not often discussed by the critics, — the true comedies; not the satirical pieces like *The Unfaithful Woman* but gay little sketches bordering on the farcical, in the style of Eugène Labiche, such as: *Photography without-* (*Fotografia senza-*) (1904) a piece of fooling written for Tina di Lorenzo and her husband; *Do not unto others* (*Non fare ad altri*) (1886) in which a magistrate attempting to confound his wife by confronting her with the photograph of her lover, pulls from his pocket the picture of their servant-maid with an amorous inscription written on

it; *The Traveling Adventure* and the delightful child's monologue, *The Chatterer* (*La chiachierina*). *One of the Honest Ones* (*Uno degli onesti*) (1900) has been acted in America as *The Honorable Lover*. His pure comedies are few in number, and it is to be regretted that he has not given us many more, for he has a delicate and constant play of drollery and a keen eye for ironic fun.

The work of Roberto Bracco leaves a final impression of profound pessimism, partly because he has chosen for presentation social ills for which no remedy has yet been found, difficulties which are as yet barely on the road to solution; and partly because, partaking of the Italian temperament, he is naturally a destructive rather than a constructive critic. He sees women as having mean opportunities, stifled in a narrow social sphere, economically enslaved, victims of a man-made system; kept in the status of children by false education and lack of responsibility; forced to trade upon their only commodity — sex — so that in their partnership with men they cannot make a free gift of their love, but must all too often barter it for a livelihood. He sees men as caught in the cogs of the world-machine, driven by hostile destiny, brotherhood forgotten, justice dismissed from the affairs of men. And concerning all this he seems only to say, "Is it not a pity? Is it not even a hopeless tragedy?" and there he stops, lingering in the pity-charity stage of social consciousness. The only atmosphere possible for the plays is of profound pessimism.

The action of the plays is of the inner psychic type. Things do not happen that call for activity, and there are no situations dramatic in the theatrical sense of the word, — which implies a striking amount of externality. The

story is invariably simple, to be told in a few words. The inner nature and inner experiences of his characters are, however, complex and interesting. He is at his best in conveying emotional crises. He has a technic remarkably well adapted to the tracing and display of gradual progressive character changes — from the elementary psychic experience of Paolina to the complicated emotional drama of Don Fiorenzo he passes delicately and firmly.

He is curiously free of all classes of society, passing up and down the social scale in his characterizations. He finds his people in the underworld of Naples, in the universities, in the bourgeois *milieu* of commerce, in the upper aristocratic circles, and with his keen Italian eye discovers in each his peculiarity, his mental or physical tic setting him off from his fellows.

With all his knowledge of stagecraft he falls at times into the old pitfalls. He resorts to expedients which are now considered *vieux jeux*, — overheard conversation, gentlemen in ladies' bedrooms and *vice versa*, hidings behind curtains and things of like nature. Add to this an occasional passage of stilted dialogue, of forced and unnatural expression, and you have the sum of his technical faults. His virtues are many. Perhaps the greatest of these is the fine sobriety and nakedness of his style. From the moment the curtain rises the action is under way and moves without pause, without side track, to a fine cumulative effect at the end. He thinks of his plays as wholes. He is without doubt the finest technician now writing for the Italian stage.

Though Bracco is the best of the Italian prose dramatists his reputation in Italy is not even yet commensurate with his merits. Luigi Tonelli writes: "Our greatest dramatist,

this artist who has always labored for his art, far from all personal interest for himself or for his managers, is to-day neglected. While the stars seek only to fill their coffers by representing the most lurid and stupid things produced by France, in which noted actresses get themselves applauded by showing their legs, the dramas of Roberto Bracco are forgotten, and perhaps he is contented that it should be so. To see the filthy French atrocities together with *Tragedies of the Soul*, with *Lost in the Darkness*, with *The Hidden Spring* would be repugnant to his spirit."

But Bracco has had considerable reputation outside of Italy. Dario Niccodemi is the only dramatist that can rival him in point of mere numbers of plays produced. Paris, Vienna, Berlin, Madrid, New York, London and Budapest have all seen his plays. He has had some influence in Germany. It is said that Hermann Bahr owes much to him. In English-speaking countries two of his dramas have had commercial success, — an adaptation by Gilbert Cannan called *Three*, played in London in 1913, and *The Countess Coquette*, a translation of *The Unfaithful Woman*, played with Alla Nazimova in the star part in America in 1907.

He does not display the jewel-like precision of d'Annunzio, the gorgeous scarlet passion of Benelli, the wide humanity of Giacosa; he does not essay any of these effects. But in his own field, the field of the drama of ideas, Roberto Bracco is the hope of Italy, because, though he does not venture to offer solutions, as indeed it does not behoove the artist to do, he is looking forward and not backward, he is trying to make vocal and eloquent in the modern theatre the fundamental ideas of the modern world.

CHAPTER VII

Actors and Acting; the Popular Theatre; the Dialect Theatre

Nowhere has the reciprocal influence of the dramatic and the histrionic arts — the literature and the acting of the play — been more effectual and more evident than in modern Italy: realistic plays have demanded a new style of acting, less subservient to immemorial tradition, more sock and less buskin, and the new acting has in its turn demanded plays more faithful to life, composed in the key of natural human intercourse. To get the proper perspective for the study of this matter, one must go back again to the fifties, the time when the *star* system was beginning to go to seed. This system has operated in Italy, precisely as it operates elsewhere; when a great actor had surrounded himself with a troupe of mediocre or poor performers, who served as a foil to his brightness, things went well enough so long as his repertory contained nothing but classical tragedy, costume drama and fantastic comedy; the manœuvres of the minor actors could be borne with patience while the audience was merely waiting for the entrance of the star. But as soon as realistic plays of contemporary life began to get a hearing, the system was doomed. The star cut but a poor figure when he exchanged cloak and sword for frock or morning coat, and as every sentence and gesture in the new plays was significant, the inexpert acting of the

subordinates became unbearable; and when a company came to include several trained actors, the old hero-play became impossible.

It was a company of French actors which first brought home to Italian audiences and critics the shortcomings and anachronisms of their own acting. In the decade 1850–1860 the company of Meynardier toured the Peninsula with a repertory of Dumas *fils* and Emile Augier, then the last word in the realistic drama. It was a revelation — both as to plays and play-acting. For the first time Italians caught a glimpse of an artistic ensemble in which the personality of each actor was subordinated and adapted to an effective whole.

It is greatly to the credit of Italian actors and the Italian theatre in general that they had the openness of mind to see their fault and the courage and the energy to set about the remedy. The press, too, set to work to stimulate actors and actor-managers to encourage and to construct a vehicle which would appeal to the intellect as well as to the emotions, — which could, in other words, suitably produce a modern play. This meant the eclipse of the star, and though he still shines with a mild lustre in certain high places in the Italian theatre, he represents a régime deeply deprecated by all modern and artistic actors.

Inspired by the French acting, Louis Belloti Bon (1819–1883), a native Italian with this incongruously French name, organized a company after the model of Meynardier's. Italian actors responded readily to the call. This company Bon trained to the last minute, — each actor equally important with the others, each disciplined as an all-round actor, having his strong points of course, but

not trained out of emphasis. For this perfected instrument, this theatrical orchestra, he asked a suitable vehicle from the playwrights. In response Paolo Ferrari and Achille Torelli supplied him with comedies which called for realistic acting, from which the star was eliminated. The realistic acting called for more and more realistic plays — the new plays for new and newly organized companies of actors — and behold, the new movement was under way, the movement which reached its apogee in Eleonora Duse.

The old tradition in acting produced some veritable giants, players whose genius was so colossal as to justify Italy's boast that she has the world's greatest histrionic tradition. She can name half a dozen lofty geniuses where France and England can muster but two or three. While most of Italy's great names belong to the old school, there are none of them that rival in lustre the name of Duse, modern of the moderns and the greatest actress of modern times.

For the most part, Italian actors have been born of theatrical parents, *figli dell' arte* as they are called, and they are prevailingly of one artistic family. Gustavo Modena (1803–1863) first set himself to the task of improving the standard of acting in the years following 1840. He was the Italian Edmund Keene, the dominating theatrical figure of his time. A man of great practical ability, a soldier of distinction, a patriot of the New Italy, he introduced into his art his ability for close contact with reality. Italian acting had been for generations under the influence on the one hand of the *lazzi* of the *commedia dell'arte*, which conceived of action as violent activity, and on the other hand of classical tragedy in the grand manner.

The actors indulged in pathetic exaggerations, cries, gestures of despair, overwhelming any true tragedy or real comedy in a flood of hopeless mediocrity of action; interpretation was a matter of routine and tradition. Modena introduced into this chaotic acting a reform similar to that of Goldoni in comedy. He took a great stride in the direction of naturalness. In action he discarded the old violence to substitute moderation and sobriety; in diction substituted speaking for chanting; he tried to make acting true to life and at the same time classical, taking truth as his inspiration, beauty for his end. He attempted to avoid anachronisms in costuming and bearing, producing a sensation, for example, when he played Saul in Alfieri's play of that name in the costume of a Hebrew shepherd.

Adelaide Ristori divides with Modena the renown of the Italian stage of the old school. Her international fame and success equaled that which Sarah Bernhardt was to attain fifty years later. Both of her parents were actors. Born in 1821, she made her début at the age of three months and nearly broke up the performance with her screaming. Before she was fifteen she was playing the *grande amoureuse* rôles in the plays of Shakespeare, Pellico, Schiller and Hugo. Soon her fame had leaped over the boundaries of her native land and she achieved a European reputation greater than that of any other artist of her generation. She worked on the same principles as did Modena; sobriety, never exaggeration or loud cries or furious gestures; never rant, no substitution of force for acting, but always beauty, balance, the true interpretation of her part. She believed firmly in the nobility of her art, insisting always that the actor is an artist and

as such is responsible for the observation of the canons of his art and for the presentation of truth and beauty. He must be intelligent, well read, educated, otherwise he cannot do justice to the great works of the art he is called upon to interpret and to mediate. Critics are united in praising in Ristori just this marvelous intelligent culture which gave her interpretation its superb certainty. Bernard Shaw, who saw her in London, has no words too fervent to praise her acting. Ristori may have added nothing to the theory of acting, but by the charm of her personality and the weight of her dramatic scholarship she verified and deepened the doctrines of the new realistic stage, though she herself belonged to the old tradition.

Modena had two great pupils, Tommaso Salvini (1829–1913), a noted tragedian who dominated the Italian stage for half a century; and Ernesto Rossi, more modern. Salvini created a great many of the mid-century rôles in the plays of Niccolini and of Giacometti, notably his Corrado in *Civil Death,* and in many other tragedies. He retained the grand style, tempered a bit with intelligence. He, like Ristori, was eminently an intelligent actor. He saw Ristori in 1844 and, much impressed by her learning and beauty, resolved as far as possible to make her manner his. Force and dignity may be said to have been characteristic of his art. He was at his best in the plays of Shakespeare as King Lear, Hamlet, Othello.

But La Ristori and Salvini, great as they were, were on a lateral branch of the living organism of the theatre; they were the end of an evolution, not the pushing head of a growing one. Ernesto Rossi, on the other hand, though he had not their genius, has through his artistic descend-

ants been the greatest power in the modern theatre. He is, as it were, the grandfather through his pupil Cesare Rossi, of Duse, of Zacconi, of Flavio Andò and many others of those artists who are associated particularly with the modern drama. Cesare Rossi was born in 1820 and filled rôles in the company of Ernesto Rossi and later in the troupe of Louis Belloti Bon. In him there is the meeting of the two great forces in Italian acting, — the old, the Modena-Ristori-Salvini-tradition, and the realistic modernist tradition of French acting which Belloti Bon was introducing into Italy at the time Rossi was forming himself. An actor of no small powers himself, he is more famous as the instructor of all the great actors, with the remarkable exception of Novelli. With Rossi's activities and influence we come definitely to the theatre of our own day.

And the supreme outstanding artist of the modern Italian stage, who has already been acclaimed in this discussion, concerning whom it is difficult to speak without superlatives, in the judgment of most critics the greatest actress produced by and producing the new tradition, is Eleonora Duse. Her world fame rivals and even dims that of Sarah Bernhardt, whom as an exponent of the realistic drama she far surpasses. Unlike Bernhardt she has had the courage and the originality to break entirely with the old rhetorical, oratorical school, and to come out completely and sincerely as a modern. As a matter of fact she is the only contemporary actress in Italy who has given this proof of the courage of her convictions. All the others have lingering shadows of the old style, they display reminiscences of Bernhardt, of Ristori; they smack of their provinces and their provincial training.

Not so Duse. Her daring intelligence has done away with limitations. She has no limitations and — in the thing she attempts to do — no faults; beautiful in person, she is even more beautiful in spirit; in tragedy and in comedy, in drama and in farce she is equally at home, equally tactful, truthful, illuminating, penetrating, — in a word, the great artist.

Duse is also an *enfant de la balle,* for she comes of a family which had entertained the theatregoing Italians for three generations. Born in 1859 in a railway train when her parents were on their way to play in Venice, she endured every hardship in her youth. Often, so the tale goes, she did not have enough to eat and never was she well clothed. But she was frequenting the green room and learning the tongue and the technic. Her first appearance at a very early age was as Cosette in *Les Misérables.* At fifteen she made her official début in the company of Cesare Rossi as Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet.* The performance took place in the open-air theatre at Verona and was a delirious success. D'Annunzio has consecrated the girl's triumph in some of the most beautiful pages of *Il Fuoco,* whose heroine, La Foscarina, is said to be Duse. She soon turned from romantic to ultra-naturalistic acting and made her national reputation in Émile Zola's ghastly tragedy *Thérèse Raquin.* With this she broke entirely away from the traditional histrionic art of rhetoric to tread the then almost unexplored path of naked truth. With her triumph the art of acting in Italy celebrated its rebirth. Since that time her acting has but ripened and matured. She has chosen the modern drama for her field, — the plays of Dumas *fils* and Sudermann's *Heimat* being her best

known vehicles. Of recent years she has been playing almost entirely in the dramas of D'Annunzio.

A turning point in her public as well as her private life was her acquaintance with D'Annunzio. For her he has written perhaps half his plays and she has acted in many more of them. Her best parts are Silvia in *La Gioconda*, Anna in *The Dead City*, Mila di Codra in *The Daughter of Jorio* and Elena Comnena in *Glory*. Duse has felt that in playing these purely Italian plays she has been promoting a true Italian theatre; she feels also a mission as poetic propagandist. She is carrying the gospel of beauty to the hungry multitudes who are too often put off with the stone of realistic cynicism when they are begging for the bread of true inspiration. So she has given to D'Annunzio a large place in her repertory though his plays have not been her greatest successes.

Bernard Shaw saw Duse in London in 1895 when she was at the height of her powers. The usually cool and analytic critic felt that in her he had seen the perfect interpreter. His analysis of her talent is so just and fair yet so enthusiastic that it seems likely to stand as the ultimate estimate of her worth. Duse's every rôle, he says, is a separate creation. "When she comes on the stage you are welcome to take your opera glass and count whatever lines time and care have so far traced on her. They are the credentials of her humanity; and she knows better than to obliterate that significant handwriting beneath a layer of peach bloom from the chemist's. . . . Duse is not in action five minutes before she is a quarter of a century ahead of the handsomest woman in the world. . . . Duse, with a tremor of the lip which you feel rather than see and which lasts half an instant,

touches you straight to the very heart; and there is not a line in the face or a cold tone in the gray shadow which does not give poignancy to that tremor." "Duse produces the illusion of being infinite in variety of beautiful pose and motion. Every idea, every shade of thought and mood expresses itself delicately but vividly to the eye; and yet, in an apparent million of changes and inflexions, it is impossible to catch any line of an awkward angle, or any strain interfering with the perfect abandonment of all the limbs in their natural gravitation toward the finest grace, She is ambidextrous and supple like a gymnast or a panther; only the multitude of ideas that find physical expression in the movements are all of that high quality which marks off humanity from the animals, and, I fear, from a good many gymnasts. When it is remembered that the majority of tragic actors excel only in explosions of those passions which are common to man and brute, there will be no difficulty in understanding the indescribable distinction which Duse's acting acquires from the fact that behind every stroke of it there is a distinctly human idea. . . . No physical charm is noble as well as beautiful unless it is the expression of moral charm, and it is because Duse's range includes these high moral notes, if I may so express myself, that her compass, extending from the depths of a mere predatory creature like Claude's wife up to Marguerite Gautier at her kindest and Magda at her bravest, so immeasurably dwarfs the poor octave and a half on which Sarah Bernhardt plays such pretty canzonets and stirring marches."

The constant strain of acting the poignant even violent emotions of D'Annunzio's pieces and the burden of advancing years have induced in the great actress a sen-

sible modification of her style in the last few years. Instead of being emotional, tense, nervous, it has become more and more static. She is forced to spare herself the more arduous portrayals, but she still remains in Italian eyes the greatest of the world's actresses.

Her partner in many theatrical ventures has been the actor Ermete Zacconi, also a product of the *atelier* of Cesare Rossi and a *figlio dell' arte*. Like Duse, he went on the stage early in life and early displayed great ability. Though he had been for some years before the public, he made his great name in 1891, playing in De Banville's *Gringoire* and above all in Ibsen's *Ghosts*. The great Norwegian had hitherto been known only by *A Doll's House*. Zacconi with his success in *Ghosts* plunged head over heels into the ultra-modern movements and achieved extraordinary fame. Like Duse, Zacconi is more at home in the modern rôles. Tolstoi, Turgeniev and Hauptmann are all in his repertory, which contains also many modern Italian plays. Bracco is represented by his *Don Pietro Caruso;* Rovetta by *The Dishonest Men;* Giacosa by *The Stronger* and *Sad Loves;* Testoni by *Il Cardinale Lambertini*. He has also appeared in plays by Bovio, Butti, Praga and D'Annunzio, in whose *La Gioconda* and *Glory* Zacconi has taken the leading man's part.

Zacconi is a modernist; he excels in realistic touches, in matters of detail, retaining at the same time a grasp on the fundamental idea; his forte is those parts which depict the fermentation of modern doubts and conflicts. Eugen Zabel says, "He is the pathologist and clinical student of modern dramaturgy." In every hero he discovers an abnormal being in whom love or suffering bring forth new powers.

Zacconi's only rival was Ermete Novelli, who was perhaps among the men the brightest star in the Italian histrionic firmament. He was distinguished among his contemporaries for his great versatility. He played the tragic rôles of Othello and Hamlet, the ironic comedy of Cossa's Nero, the sentimental Père Lebonnard, and farcical monologues of his own composition, all with the same astonishing ease. He had not the literary insight of Zacconi, but he was possessed of a natural histrionic endowment surpassed by none.

His father and mother also were theatrical folk, — his mother an actress, his father prompter of a small troupe. He was born on a May night of 1851. His mother died soon after, and his father, a busy man, let the little Ermete grow up as best he could in and about the theatre. As a child he trained his histrionic sense with a theatre of marionettes. His influential teacher was Belloti Bon, with whom he remained six years, so that he, too, united in himself the old and the new acting, — that of the school of Modena, Ristori and Salvini with that of the naturalists. Under Bon Novelli developed into the foremost character actor of his generation.

He perfected himself first in comedy rôles — Plautus, Molière and Goldoni — then turned to drama, Nero in Cossa's play, Corrado in *Civil Death*, Father Lebonnard in Jean Aicard's play of that name, Louis XI in Casimir Delavigne's tragedy, and finally the star Shakespearean parts, — Hamlet, Othello, Shylock. More than Zacconi, Novelli confined himself to the classical repertory of the star and more, too, than he played in foreign dramas. He did not really contribute anything to the stage in method or theory but he added another name to those

which constitute the boast of the Italian theatre. His attempt to establish an Italian national theatre was interesting though unsuccessful. He appeared in nearly every country of the Occidental world,—Spain, Portugal, France, Belgium, England, Germany, Russia, Austria, Rumania, Greece, Egypt and the two Americas.

Novelli had seen and admired in France the fine organization of the Comédie Française which frees actors and authors alike from mere commercialism, which establishes a norm of acting and constitutes a rallying point for the serious drama. He proposed to establish such a permanent theatre in Italy, and in Rome he rented a house to found the Italian *Maison de Molière,* which however he appropriately called *La Casa di Goldoni.* It opened in 1900, but notwithstanding the support of the élite and the enthusiasm and self-sacrifice of its talented founder, it was short-lived. The Italian public was not yet ready for a repertory theatre, and first-rate actors were too hard to get.

None of these, the greatest actors of Italy, is so particularly associated with the modern movement as some of their less known confrères. First in this list must stand Flavio Andò and Tina di Lorenzo, who have played in more contemporary plays than any other pair in the Peninsula. Andò is an actor of distinction and power, at his best in the modern drama. He and Tina have been playing in native Italian productions, — in Bracco and Butti as well as the standard French repertory.

It would be impossible to mention — so many are they — all the modern actors of merit, some however that must be named are: Giovanni Emanuel, who only falls short of the very greatest; Libero Pilotto, Claudio Liegheb, Gustavo Salvini, son of the famous Salvini; Ruggero

Ruggieri, and Virginio Talli — they of the generation now passing. Among the foremost of the younger men are Alberto Giovannini, who created several of Sem Benelli's rôles, Ettore Paladini, the mainstay of the Teatro Argentina, Armando Falcone and Sichel.

Of the actresses those whose names stand out are Virginia Reiter, Gina Favre, Lyda Borelli, Evelina Paoli, Maria Melato, Olga Gianni (Novelli's leading lady) and Dina Galli, all now a little beyond the zenith of their fame. The sisters Irma and Emma Grammatica are perhaps the foremost now before the public.

The company of Sicilian players with Giovanni Grasso has acted in nearly all the important centers of Europe and America. The fame of this enterprise is due to the genius of Grasso and the Sicilian dialect plays of Verga and Capuana. Grasso's acting is ultra-realistic; he brings on the stage the Sicilian temperament with all its brutality, bestiality, fieriness, amorousness, religion, — human nature in the raw. Nevertheless there runs through his acting a certain superhuman quality, a sort of tragic mysticism which makes the performances more than mere presentation of manners. The powerful acting of the company was the result of dramatic intuition and imagination, not of careful training, for few of them were educated people and they gained their proficiency only by experience. But it has the effectiveness of acting that is natural and springs from the very violence of passion. They excel, as is to be expected from these Sicilian peasants, in the plays which demand violence, exaggerated anger and lust and fear, such as in Verga's *Rustic Chivalry*, Capuana's *Witchcraft, Feudalism*, the play of the Spaniard Angelo Guimera.

Signor Grasso was discovered by Ernesto Rossi and at his instigation formed the company. For ten years, 1892–1902, he contented himself with playing in Sicily, but in 1903 he started his world-tour with a visit to Rome, where he quickly became the fashion. Since then, like all great Italian actors, Grasso and his company have spent more time in foreign parts than in their native land. Grasso is the main actor and manager of the enterprise. His best parts are in the plays already named, and also as Corrado in Giacometti's *Civil Death,* the hard-ridden war horse of every Italian actor. He plays it with a crude force and virility that surpasses even Novelli. He has also in his repertory D'Annunzio and Shakespeare, but these productions of an eminently sophisticated society are beyond or rather outside his limit, being too intellectual and lacking the primitive type of emotion that he best expresses.

What, in summary, may one say of the Italian style and how does it compare with other modern acting? It must be admitted that the ensemble work of no Italian company is equal to that found in the Théâtre de l'Œuvre at Paris, in Reinhardt's Deutsches Theatre, or in Granville Barker's Duke of York's venture. The minor parts are too often sacrificed to the actor-manager's. That is the curse of the Italian stage as it is of the American. True, this is not entirely the fault of the manager; it is the fault of a system in which there are few long runs, many different plays in repertory and little time for the proper training of subordinates. The parts are badly learned if learned at all and it is not uncommon, even in the high-class companies, to have the prompter read through the entire performance just one sentence ahead of the actor.

The Italian, however, is a born actor. Eugen Zabel speaks of the beautiful voices and the expressive gestures of the Italians. The eloquent gesture he admires most: they seem to speak with their whole bodies, they are virtuosi in the handling of their arms, hands, even legs and feet — their very backs are endowed with speech. This eloquence and variety of gesture is their greatest merit; their greatest defect, or rather an aggressive fault, is one which springs out of their very histrionism, — the tendency to rhetoric and oratory. This is partly the fault of the actor and partly that of the author who writes plays in which there are speeches capable of being ranted. Nevertheless the actor is the one to blame when he substitutes force for legitimate dramatic effect. The Italian ideal is all too often not truth, not a faithful presentation of character, but beauty of effect achieved, if need be at the expense of something higher. The Italian loves the ring and roar of fine words, the music of a lovely voice, the grace of fine gestures and splendid poses. To a nation immemorially trained in the love of the plastic arts he offers fine lines and statuesque posture.

This should not convey the impression that the Italian is a poor actor; on the contrary he is a superb actor, but of the type of a quarter of a century ago. The proof is that Italians play the intellectual rôles, Ibsen, for example, or Hauptmann, as emotional ones. Duse herself condemns the Italian theatre for this tradition in acting. "To save the theatre, the theatre must be destroyed; the actors and actresses must all die of the plague; they poison the air, they make art impossible." This is of course unduly harsh and unduly sweeping, though just

in its intention. The Italians must renovate their theatrical ideal to save their drama.

The organization of the amusement business in Italy is different from that of any other European country, being almost exactly similar to that of America. Each star, and there are many, has his own company and travels about from city to city, playing a week or a month at each. Though Rome is the political capital, it is not the artistic center, sharing this honor with Milan, Bologna, Venice, Genoa, Turin, Florence and Naples. These cities from a theatrical point of view are equally important. There is no metropolitan and provincial theatre; a *capo comici* may produce a play for the first time in any one of twenty towns. There is no Paris, London or New York.

The constant moving about from theatre to theatre necessitates a meagreness of *mise-en-scène* which borders at times on poverty. The sets are often dilapidated, the costumes worn and the furniture in an advanced state of ricketyness. Indeed one is constantly astonished at the indifference to scenic illusion; there seems to be little or no care to have the set harmonize with the drama; the local orchestra will play a Strauss waltz before the curtain goes up on a dire tragedy; the gilt furniture of a fashionable drawing-room serves for the presentation of bourgeois and even peasant drama. There is no *gemütlichkeit* about the great run of Italian sets and theatres.

There are something like a hundred and fifty theatrical companies traveling in Italy at the same time. This results naturally in financial and artistic competition. The mere matter of making a living might be better if there were, as there is in America, a theatrical trust to

furnish financial backing; but each *capo comici* is his own financier, his own impresario, stage manager and leading actor. The *Unione dei Capo comici* organized in 1808 is merely a mutual protective society, an actors' union.

The organization of the theatres, traveling companies with insufficient financial backing, actor-managers, the star system, — many Italians feel that these things are slowly throttling the national drama; they preclude in countless ways a realization of a genuine art drama. These people feel also that the national drama needs cultivating and point with disgust to the numbers of French plays in the repertory. There seems to have been in Italy no serious opposition to native production, only the stars have gone elsewhere for their fat parts and effective plays; there has been no obstacle corresponding to the censorship in England; the audiences are as a rule ready to accept anything from Plautus to Praga; they are now willing to regard the playhouse as a place for the study of serious problems, not merely as an evening's amusement. The predominance of companies playing drama over those playing opera or variety will prove this. No! The difficulty lies not with the public but with the theatre itself. The "star system" is an incubus which stifles attempts at artistic freedom.

To cast off this incubus they have founded permanent theatres, or at least companies which remain in one city, for none of them has been permanent. The first of these attempts was at Naples as early as 1878, — a short-lived experiment. The *Compagnia Carignano* of Turin lasted for eight years, 1877–1885, and helped to train Duse. A more recent attempt, the *Teatro dell' arte* in Turin, soon went under. In 1900 Novelli made his ill-fated attempt

to found the *Casa de Goldoni* at the Teatro Valle in Rome. They all failed, and in every case it was due to the lack of actors, every good artist being at the head of his own company and not willing to give up his permanent and lucrative position to accept a minor post.

There have been, however, in the last ten years two fairly successful ventures in the line of popular theatres in permanent homes, one at Milan — the *Teatro Manzoni*, the other at Rome, — the *Compagnia Stabile dell' Argentina*. The *Manzoni* is probably in popular estimation the leading prose theatre in Italy. The prices are about half those of an ordinary commercial house. It is a real people's theatre, too, for the audiences are made up of the lower classes, the *popolo*, who eat and read and nurse their babies in true Italian fashion. It possesses one or two first-rate actors, and native pieces predominate, though there is an occasional excursion into French and German. This venture is famous as the *Teatro del popolo*.

The *Argentina*, founded in 1906, is perhaps the most successful of the repertory enterprises. Signor Eduardo Boutet, its manager, in a speech made in 1908, summarized the hopes and purposes of the venture. He proposed to do away with the actor-manager whose desires and necessities dictate the choice of plays; and to substitute for him a board of lay members to control and direct the selection of plays, and to direct the manager in all matters of policy. He proposed, in the second place, to give equal training to the whole cast, in order to secure that smoothness of ensemble so desirable and so rare. He proposed to alter the proportion of emphasis placed upon actor and author, putting more upon the author so that he may be regarded not as a mere purveyor of rôles but a co-

worker in one great artistic endeavor. And last he foretold that the stage is to become in some sense a great social laboratory where the problems of the world are analyzed and before the eyes of those most concerned with them. The *Argentina* has struggled to carry out many of the details of this noble programme, and it has the merit of being a courageous attempt at a permanent or short-run theatre. It may furthermore claim the sufficient glory of introducing Sem Benelli to the world.

Another more recent establishment is the *Teatro degli Autori* at Rome, formed for the purpose of giving young playwrights an opportunity to see their work. This has the advantage over the Argentina of having a new and comfortable building at its disposal.

In addition to the permanent professional establishments there are many prosperous amateur societies; few villages are too small to have a Teatro Sociale in which semi-professionals and amateurs act together. The plays they act may be and often are the worst imaginable, but the writer remembers having seen in one case *Ghosts* in a little mountain village of Northern Italy done by one of these amateur companies. The great cities have their ambitious and successful organizations also, like the Philodrammatici of Milan and the famous Florentine and Roman societies.

Of recent years there have sprung up theatres which promise to become the most popular spectacles in the country, even to the detriment of vaudeville. These are the *Teatri a sezioni* or *Teatri minimi.* Just as in Spanish theatres the evening is devoted to a number of one-act plays and *zarzuelas,* so in the *Teatro a sezioni* as many as five or six plays may be given in a night, each one lasting

say three quarters of an hour with just enough time left between them to shift the scenery. The theatre opens about six-thirty or seven o'clock, and the last section begins about eleven. Each section may be viewed for the modest price of half a lira; one may go for the whole evening or for only one play; the tickets are rarely sold beforehand; in short, in point of convenience the *Teatro minimo* is unexcelled. The pieces given are not the Spanish *zarzuelas* (musical comedies) but usually short plays,—farcical, serious or tragic. Good one-acters are easy to come by, for nearly all first-rate contemporary dramatists have produced them. The actors are as a rule competent. The absolute freedom of attendance, the relative certainty of getting at least one good play in the evening, the informality, the cheapness of the seats and convenience of the hours make the *Teatro a sezioni* a hope for the serious drama, and a weapon with which to combat the cinematograph and the variety show.

The Italians have for a century stimulated national interest in the drama by means of various contests with prizes offered by the government, by municipalities, by societies and newspapers. Some of the finest work of the modern movement has been called out by these contests. All the more recent men have written one or more prize-winners. One of the most famous of the dramatic prize contests is that of Turin, though Florence and Rome also conduct them. These dramatic expositions occur several times a year and the number of plays and contestants is appalling. Whatever one may think of the mere adventitiousness of this method of fostering drama, Italy has been lucky in having so many successful playwrights take part in the contests.

The most characteristically Italian kind of drama is undoubtedly that which appeals to the people themselves, the uneducated classes in whom the love of the theatre is unalloyed, who are concerned with being entertained and not elevated. This drama must be considered under two heads — first that most Italian of the arts, the theatre with masks and its derivatives, and second the dialect theatre which has reached an extraordinary stage of development.

The *commedia dell' arte* has its origins in the remotest past of Italy and came into full flower in the Renaissance. Other names for it are *Commedia improvvisa,* and *commedia a maschera,* or mask comedy. It reached its apogee in the eighteenth century. In the *commedia dell' arte* the dialogue was not written at all, but a scenario was supplied for each play and the actors made up the dialogue as the action proceeded. The course of the intrigue was interrupted by *lazzi* where the buffoons made sport for the groundlings. Out of this grew the mask comedy in which the action is carried on chiefly by certain typical stereotyped figures in masks speaking certain local dialects. This is the form in which it has come down to modern times in the theatre of the *basso popolo.*

The characters of the mask comedy are divided into two classes, — the masked and unmasked rôles. The important standard masks are Pantalone, a Venetian merchant; Il Dottore, usually a physician or a lawyer from Bologna; Arlecchino and Brighella, blundering foolish servants from Bergamo; Pulcinella, a rogue from Naples; Coviello, from Calabria. The female masks are the soubrette Colombina, Rosetta, Smeraldina, Diamantina, whatever name she may go by — and her rival, the widow

Pasquella. Each character speaks his own dialect, wears his own costume and has his own peculiarities, all of which have remained essentially unchanged even to our own day. The characters without masks were the lovers, who spoke in Tuscan, and others according to the needs of the intrigue. These personages correspond with amazing nearness to the stock characters of the low burlesque stage in America, — the Irishman, the Jew, the German, the negro. Each Italian city now retains its favorite comic mask. In Florence it is Stentorello; in Naples it is Pulcinella; in Sicily it is Pasquino. The Florentine and Neapolitan masks are nowadays the most important ones, indeed the only ones worthy of being considered in a history of the modern drama, the others being only locally important.

Stentorello always plays in Florentine, for the most part in adaptations. They are usually burlesque or parody, full of horse-play and jokes in more or less questionable taste.

It is in Naples that the comedy of masks has had the most popularity. Here Pulcinella has maintained a theatre all of his own since the middle of the eighteenth century and has played to crowded houses at the San Carlino and the Teatro Nuovo. His history has been written in detail by the Neapolitan dramatist and poet, Salvatore di Giacomo.

Pulcinella has been traced back to Roman times. He is perhaps the combination of two characters from Roman comedy, Maccus and Bucco. He wears nowadays his traditional costume just as it has always been, — a mask with a hooked nose, a slight hump on his back, and protuberant stomach in front; he wears a loose white costume

with large trousers, a smock belted in at the waist and a pointed cloth hat. Pulcinella is in a sense the embodiment of the Neapolitan spirit, — its wit, its *gaminerie*, its baseness, its lofty flights. He plays for the most part as a servant whose stupidity gets himself and his master into trouble, and whose good luck gets them out again.

Pulcinella's home in Naples up to 1884 was the San Carlino Theatre, where some of the famous actors in the part were Francesco Cerlone (1720–1812), Filippo Cammarano (1765–1842) and Salvatore Petito, who occupied the scene for more than thirty years in the first half of the nineteenth century. The last of the famous San Carlino Pulcinellas was Pasquale Altavilla, also a playwright, whose productions are still in the repertory. More than sixty plays of his have been printed. The last writer for the San Carlino was a son of Salvatore Petito, Antonio, who died in 1876, and who has been immortalized by the De Goncourt brothers in their Italian Letters.

The Pulcinella theatre of to-day is the Teatro Nuovo, where Giuseppe di Martino held the main place until his death a few years ago. He was given to varying the plays of Petito and Altavilla with French farces, mostly adaptations from Labiche. Such plays are distorted until they are scarcely recognizable to make a part for Pulcinella and to give them an appeal to the Neapolitan. Another favorite form of play is the revue of the year, which is put on in December. It is like a revue on the Boulevards, in Piccadilly or on Broadway, only that the events satirized are purely local.

The original plays written for Di Martino are legion and the names of a few must suffice to suggest their character and atmosphere: *The Eruption of Vesuvius, or*

Pulcinella and Picchio frightened by an earthquake (the longer the title the better it pleases). *A Mutilated Devil* is the work of Antonio Petito. The Devil returning to earth to avenge himself for the mutilation of his portrait by a beautiful young woman, performs terrific wonders, causing all manner of comic dismay and astonishment. Another play out of the heart of Naples is *On the Second and Third Floors in the Healthy Quarter, with Pulcinella as a generous servant.* In Naples, it must be remembered, the same house may contain families of all the social grades, — the higher you go the more expensive the apartments. Still another is *Christmas Eve,* which shows how a poor family after many vicissitudes acquires a great feast for Christmas day.

Naples, besides the theatre of masks, boasts of another people's theatre still more popular, — the Teatro Fiorentini, founded and maintained by Eduardo Scarpetta (Cavaliere della Corona d'Italia), co-dictator with Matilda Serao of his native city. Scarpetta reacted against the rule of Pulcinella and attempted to substitute for him a character of his own creation, Don Felice Scioscia-mocca. Scarpetta opened his own theatre about 1880 and for years was the rage, playing to crowded houses every night. He has written a series of fascinating memoirs narrating his career. Scarpetta throws overboard all the Neapolitan baggage of the Nuovo and frankly makes up his entertainments with adaptations from the French. Again Labiche and the comedians and vaudevillistes of the Boulevards supply the material. Each play is adapted to contain a part for Don Felice, who is a simple-minded and timid young man. Eduardo Scarpetta has been recently succeeded in the rôle by his

son, Vincenzo Scarpetta, who promises to inherit his father's popularity.

In addition to the comedy of masks and its derivatives, there exists a more serious movement in the dialect drama which has produced many writers worthy of note since the middle of the last century. In order to understand how it is that a drama in dialect can flourish in Italy, one must bear in mind that, though the Peninsula has been a political unit since 1860, spiritually it has remained a group of provinces kept apart by differences of speech, custom and psychology. Each province has its local interest, and though the study of Italian in the schools is rapidly breaking down linguistic barriers, each has its own language often unintelligible in another province. Not only in language but also in character is Rome different from Bologna, Milan, Naples and Palermo. Regional prejudices and regional interest are a force here as nowhere else in the world. It is easy to comprehend then that the regional drama will exist and flourish.

Piedmont was the first to achieve a distinguished drama, the work of the eminent journalist turned poet, Vittorio Bersezio (1830–1900), author of many plays. He is famous above all for his *Sorrows of Mr. Travet* (*Le miserie del Sig. Travetti*) (1863), a picture of an essentially Italian and Piedmontese interior, painted with the delicacy of touch and brilliant color of a Vermeer. The charm of this comedy is lost in analysis; it lies in the verity, human and Italian, of Travet, in the exactitude of the details, and in the reality of the circumstances of Turinese life. *The Sorrows of Mr. Travet* has enjoyed an immense popularity in Italy, where it has been translated not only into Italian but into most of the other dialects. Benini plays

it in Venetian, Novelli in Florentine. Bersezio made a sequel to this, his best known play, called *The Joys of Mr. Travet* (*Le prosperità del Sig. Travetti*); also *A Soap-bubble* (*Una bolla di sapone*) (1863), and many other works of minor importance.

In Venice, too, the dialect theatre has flourished and has attained considerable literary merit with Riccardo Selvatico (1850–1900) and above all with Giacinto Gallina (1852–1902). The tradition of Venetian comedy has been almost unbroken since Goldoni and Gozzi.

Giacinto Gallina began his career as a cello player in a theatre orchestra, but finding that his vocation lay elsewhere, began writing for the stage. He tried himself out on drama and tragedies, but struck his vein at last in dialect comedy. His is distinctly the Goldonian manner, being at times even too closely inspired by his illustrious fellow townsman. Like Goldoni, Gallina does not regard life under a dark glass or a microscope, but rather through the rosy spectacles of a comic optimism. He corrects mistakes and weaknesses not by irony or violence but by persuasion as in *A Ruined Family* (*Una famiglia rovinata*). *The Mother never Dies* (*La mamma non muore*) (1879) expresses Gallina's idea that the mother is the center and soul of the home, and that, lacking her, the family is sure to disintegrate, and most famous of all *The Eyes of the Heart* (*Gli occhi del cuore*), whose theme is that the eyes of the heart can perceive even when the sight of the eyes is destroyed.

The Venetians have inscribed on Gallina's tomb, "He was the man who received the soul of the Venetian people into his own great ingenuous soul, and has showed it, living, in his plays which were inspired by genius and

goodness." Allowing for the natural hyperbole of an epitaph, he states the case as his fellow townsmen saw it.

It would be ungrateful to leave the Venetian dialect theatre without mentioning Ferruccio Benini, an actor-manager of distinction, who plays the larger proportion of his repertory in Venetian, who has contributed much to the modern success of this dialect drama.

Milan has produced in the actor-author, Edoardo Ferravilla (1850–1915), a comic actor of the largest caliber and a comic writer of no mean gift. By sheer force of personality he has made the theatre of his own dialect a power in Italy. He has written for the most part the plays he appears in, presenting types which he has observed; he reveals himself rather as a student of character than as caricaturist. Ferravilla's theatrical war horse, his favorite mount, has been *A Husband for a Joke* (*Un spos per rid*).

Another Milanese writer is Carlo Bertolazzi (1870–), who has given popular pictures in the dialect of the lower classes of Milan, painted in the darkest colors. The best known of these are *In the Pawn-shop* (*Al monte di pietaa*); *Our Milan* (*Nost' Milan*); *Poor People* (*La povera gente*) and *La Gibigianna*. But the patois, being a sort of dialect of a dialect, is not adapted to serious emotions or the discussion of problems. Bertolazzi is better in his Italian plays *The Egoist* (*L'Egoista*) (1901), a study of a man devoted only to his own base interests; *The Palace of Sleep* (*La casa del sonno*) (1902), and *Lulù* which presents with extraordinary vivacity a woman who is constitutionally unable to remain faithful to the man she loves most. Others of his plays are *Lorenzo and his Lawyer* (*Lorenzo e il suo avvocato*)

(1906), *Festival Days* (*I giorni di festa*) (1908) and *Heart Shadows* (*Ombre del cuore*) (1909).

Naples, with strong local tradition such as it has, was bound to maintain a serious drama of its own. The works of Cognetti have already been mentioned as being in the Verist movement side by side with Verga and Capuana. His *Santa Lucia* and *Basso Porto* deal with Neapolitan life. So also *The Foundation of the Camorra at Naples* of Edoardo Minichini deals with Naples in 1739, when the terrible secret society was organized there. As might be expected, it is the most violent sort of melodrama. De Tommasi and Storace wrote others in the same vein. Most of these melodramas are concerned in one way or another with the Camorra, and most are of interminable length, — six, even seven acts, creaking and groaning with the weight of passion and plot they have to carry.

If a Neapolitan were asked who is the most popular author of Italy, he would name first Matilda Serao, then Salvatore di Giacomo. This latter versatile writer has taken part in nearly every side of the literary life of his home city for the last quarter century. He is journalist, novelist, chronicler — he wrote a history of the San Carlino theatre — poet of great distinction, and finally dramatist. "He writes of the irremediable sadness of old Naples with a tenderness that is real in Italy . . . but would be sentimentality in America." His plays are *Low Life* (*Mala Vita*), composed in collaboration with Cognetti, *A San Francesco*, *'Omese Mariano*, a delicate sentimental one-act drama, and finally the tragedy *Assunta Spina*, perhaps the best of his plays.

Di Giacomo knows his native city as no one else does, acquainted as he is with all the popular characters, the

beggars, the priests, the prostitutes, the politicians of the Quarters, knowing every turn in every street, seeing in the houses themselves old and familiar friends; he loves the smells and the noises of the most humanly smelly and noisy of cities. All his sensations collected in his native haunts he transfers *in toto* to the boards. Often as not the characters in his plays are real people he has known as a young man frequenter of Naples; cabbies, workmen, facchini, camorrists, street-walkers. Di Giacomo's work represents the dialect play at its best.

Though the drama in dialect sometimes attains a considerable degree of merit, the trend of the modern theatre in Italy is entirely away from localization. The various portions of the kingdom are being more and more welded into a homogeneous community by the army and the schools. The increasing wealth of the country, the greater ease of intercommunication, the interest in national politics are rapidly taking a Sicilian's mind off his own affairs, a Florentine or Milanese out of his own circle. The movement of recent years for local color has had more the effect of making real the details of works written in Italian than of encouraging dialect writing. The fact that one part of Italy cannot understand the colloquial speech of another, yet both can comprehend the language of Florence, gives but a scant audience to any single dialect. The local drama is foredoomed, its *raison d'être* being past, for with the closer unification of Italy the theatre with a wider appeal must prevail.

CHAPTER VIII

The Younger Generation

The term used to assemble a group of dramatists for convenience of discussion calls for a word of explanation. "The younger generation" must not be taken in a strictly exclusive sense, since the group includes some writers who have reached their prime; neither must it be taken in an all-inclusive sense, for the discussion will not concern itself with those whose stars are barely peeping above the horizon. It is intended to cover roughly the more conspicuous among those who have achieved a reputation but who are still producing. Some of these have been writing for years, some are only successful beginners; all make their appeal to the present generation and share its interests.

Among these younger men the leading figure is without question the Jew, Sem Benelli. His *Supper of Jokes* had a success such as is comparable in recent drama only with the success of Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Indeed, the welcome it received was more than a success, — it was a furor. The enthusiasm that he aroused then and still arouses in his countrymen is partly to be explained by the fact that he has succeeded in making poetic drama dramatic. The Italian audience loves poetry; all audiences love a play; Benelli succeeds in giving them both. Avoid-

ing the literary extravagances of D'Annunzio, refusing to allow his subject-matter to be engulfed in a wealth of expression, avoiding the *terre à terre* realism of the Verists, he writes, when he writes best, plays that are imaginative, poetic, spectacularly effective, taking literary form in a swift, terse, musical verse.

The legends of Benelli's youth are many. Whatever his antecedents (he was born in 1877), he was still young when he began writing verse and reporting on various journals, doing some work for the Florentine modernist review, *Marzocco*.

Italian critics agree Sem Benelli's distinctive contribution to the stage of to-day is his successful verse form, a dramatic form new in Italian. His idea is to reform dramatic poetry so as to make it clear and expressive, endowed with meaning as well as with harmony. He writes verse which is not given over to resounding lines but is made up of real sentences, intended to be spoken naturally, emphasizing the content, free from artificial transpositions, from occult words, from effete poetic conventions. Benelli remodeled the old eleven-syllable line of classical tragedy, the *endecasillabo sciolto*, into something that suits his own dramatic temperament. He calls them "*versi d' azione e non di canto*." His placing of emphasis on the sense occasionally plays havoc with the form, leading him into violations, sometimes even unnecessary, of the classic verse formulas. However, these may be forgiven in view of the fact that Benelli has done so great a service to Italian dramatic poetry, devising and perfecting a verse form which has almost the fluidity and flexibility of English blank verse.

In his first play [1] in prose, *The Bookworm* (*La Tignola*) (1904), Benelli shows himself to be a penetrating observer and a bitter humorist. He studies the sedentary and academic temperament in contrast with the brutalities and crudities of the world of affairs.

The Bookworm is Benelli's only prose play and constitutes his only effort to handle a modern subject. It was not successful when it was played, undoubtedly because the form was not sympathetic and the material made no appeal to Benelli's distinctive abilities.

The next play, a tragedy, is in his true vein, the historical-poetic. *The Mask of Brutus* (*La Maschera di Bruto*) (1905) is the story of Lorenzino, called Lorenzaccio, the same Medicean prince who furnished Alfred De Musset with a hero. A villainous story it is of lust and love, murder and intrigue in the corrupt court of the sixteenth-century Florence. Over the whole tragedy hangs a sense of the grim irony of fate. Except, however, for a few masterly scenes, above all that of the murder, which is one of the best in modern drama, the play is diffuse and scattered, the action muddy. But he had found his road and from now on the way was clear — historical tragedy.

Benelli's second verse drama was a masterpiece, worthy to stand with anything written in recent years, *The Supper of Jokes* (*La Cena delle beffe*) (1909). The scene is again the Florence of the Renaissance, dominated by the awful presence of Lorenzo the Magnificent. Here Benelli shows himself a consummate dramatist, blending skilfully the grotesque and the ludicrous with the terrible,

[1] Rovito in his *Dizionario* gives four plays before *La Tignola*: *Lasalle*, 1902; *La Terra*, 1903; *Vita Gaia*, 1905, and *La Morale di Casanova*, no date. We have been unable to verify these titles.

the tragic, and the sublime. It is the story of the terrible revenge wreaked by the weakling Giannetto upon two brutal, bullying brothers, Neri and Gabriello, who had long been persecuting him. The play must be seen and above all heard, to be appreciated. The weakling who hates and fears his weakness is a favorite character of Benelli's. He occurs in the title rôle of *The Bookworm;* he recurs as Lorenzaccio in *The Mask of Brutus*, now Giannetto, and later in the Emperor Otto II of *Rosmunda*. The poet draws with consummate skill this weakling, stupendously imaginative, the prey to conflicting emotions.

"When this poet touches the chord of rancour, of jealousy, of vengeance, of deception, of dissimulation, of hidden torment, his lyric instrument gives out tremendous sounds," one critic writes of him. The creatures who are actuated by these powerful malignant motives are presented in startling relief. *The Supper of Jokes* is a fine piece of livid tragedy with the turgid blood of the Renaissance coursing through its veins.

Next in excellence as well as in chronology is *The Love of the Three Kings* (*L' Amore dei tre re*) (1910), which set to music by Montemezzi has made the round of Europe and America. This drama owes more than does its predecessor to literary reminiscence. It is laid in the Middle Ages in the time of the barbarian invasion of Italy, and contains a motif to which Benelli returns more than once, the struggle between Pagan and Christian character and culture in these early days. He uses this again in *Rosmunda* and in his latest published play, *The Marriage of the Centaurs*.

It seems to be pretty well agreed that Benelli has never again reached and maintained in any play the

consistently high level of these two, — *The Supper of Jokes* and *The Love of the Three Kings*. His easy gift of versifying tempts him into prolixity. His eye for strong effects betrays him into banality. He seems to have found out a path to an infallible mechanical success, — and he follows the path. So that in all too large a measure the ideas that inspire the different plays are the same; the personages appear again and again with mere changes of costume and epoch. Even the forms of speech show the effects of this revamping, repeating process, and nouns give way to adjectives.

The Mantle (*Il Mantellaccio*) (1911) is again historical, set in a background of the academic life of the sixteenth century. *Rosmunda* (1913) is on the classic subject already worked over by Alfieri among others. Briefly, it is another revenge tragedy, and another picture of the struggle between pagan and Christian.

In *The Gorgon* (*La Gorgona*) (1913), the scene is laid in medieval Pisa. Benelli's latest play, *The Marriage of the Centaurs* (*Le nozze dei centauri*) (1915), personifies the Christian-barbarian conflict in the persons of The Emperor Otto III and the pagan woman, Stefania. It is almost a complete repetition in motivation of his *Rosmunda*. There is a patriotic acclamation of Roman civilization as against northern culture, which is evidently inspired by the clash of peoples in the World War. Again he has created two magnificent characters, that of the weakling Emperor, mystical, sensuous, intelligent, who dies of his very sensuality in the voluptuous spasmodic embrace under the passionate and criminal kiss of Stefania, the avenger. Stefania, herself, is the other notable figure. In this situation and with these persons, Benelli

has another occasion for depicting those dark emotions of revenge and hate in which he excels. Stefania's struggles between her love for Otto and her determination to destroy him are good dramatic material for any artist; for Benelli, they are the supreme opportunity. But the play is verbose and long-winded. Making a pretence of historicity, it is in reality historically inexact. The Benellian verse which in *The Supper of Jokes* was flexible and fluid, though measured and exact, has become in *The Marriage of the Centaurs* so free that it is merely rhythmic prose cut up.

Though nobody has the hardihood to attempt a final summary of a writer still living and still producing, Benelli's one prose and seven verse plays are voluminous enough to invite some general conclusions. On the surface of his work lies the fact that, like most Italians, he is a devotee at the shrines of the past; in the worship of ancient things, the contemplation of bygone national glories, he loses sight of the living present; he lives out of hearing of the complicated and interesting problems of his own day. *The Mask of Brutus* and *The Supper of Jokes* are of Renaissance Florence; *The Love of the Three Kings* of the time of Belisarius, *The Gorgon* and *The Marriage of the Centaurs* are also of the Middle Ages; but Benelli cannot in any other sense be called a historical playwright. He is not like Cossa seriously trying to re-create an epoch. Arthur Livingston says of him, "The rôle of history is merely that of a device. It lends probability to various mechanical assemblings of situation out of which an emotion may be made to spring. It arouses a sense of vagueness abstracting the audience from the pressure of immediate association." That Benelli's use of

history is, indeed, little more than a theatrical device is proved by the fact that he takes so little trouble to make it authentic. As a psychologist, Benelli is a bit one-sided. He has no skill in displaying the gentler emotions or kindly activities; his love scenes do not ring true: they are obviously constructed and self-conscious. But his portrayal of hardness, sternness, cruelty, revenge, lust, hate, are successful. One must conclude that Benelli has found himself so expert at a certain type of character and a certain side of emotional experience that he has not taken the trouble to study others. This seems a misfortune, for in *The Bookworm* there was promise of a skilful and delicate student of many aspects of character. Benelli's strength lies chiefly in his sense of dramatic and scenic effect and in his mastery of an adaptable verse. He has the eagle eye of a Sardou for situation, which he develops in historical atmosphere by means of good ready verse and adequate characterization. In every play there is at least one very dramatic scene and by these Benelli will stand.

Has Benelli, in Wilde's witty phrase, "a great future behind him?" or is he going to be able to renew himself and attain again his old level? If he can get out of his rut, if he becomes discontented with facile success, this seems likely. But if he continues to repeat himself so that his plays resemble each other like reproductions of one picture done in different colors, he has, at least, no great future in front of him. But as he is a comparatively young man and has so many gifts, there is much ground for hope.

Poetic drama, as has been hinted, satisfies the Italians' love of rhetoric better than mere prose can do. The

names of contemporary writers of verse plays are legion. A few will suffice to indicate the number and the character of the work. Ettore Moschino (1867–), more famous as a lyric poet, has published a *Tristan e Isolda* done in the manner of D'Annunzio; Domenico Tumiati (1874–) made an interesting and distinct contribution to the theatre with his revival of the chanted play (not sung like opera). Older men are Arrigo Boïto (b. 1842), who wrote a *Nero* (1900); G. A. Cesareo (b. 1861), a *Francesca da Rimini* (1906); Enrico Corradini (b. 1868), a student of Nietzsche, a *Julius Caesar* (1902); Pietro Calvi (1859–1900), many tragedies — *Caracalla, Bianca Capello, Ferdinand Lasalle, Maria Maddalena;* Domenico Oliva (b. 1860), *Robespierre;* Ettore Romagnoli has had a success at the *Argentina* recently with his *Elena.* Mention should also he made of the delightful comedy in verse of Luigi Rasi, the famous actor and teacher of dramatic art, *The Comedy of the Pest,* in a sense a revival of the spirit of Boccaccio's *Decameron,* so witty is it, so free of guile, so utterly unmoral.

Washington Borg (b. 1864) sprang quite recently into the limelight with his adaptation in 1916 of Roberto Bracco's *La Presidentessa,* which he has made into an altogether delightful comedy, as light and frothy as the sea foam. Having thus gained the public ear, Borg revived a comedy of his own, *Nude* (*Nuda*), which had lain in his drawer for some time. His has been a queer sort of career. It is not clear where he acquired his Americo-Scandinavian name. Of a Maltese family, having lived in Egypt, he calls himself an Englishman. Born in 1864 of a rich family of bankers, he was educated in Pavia and Milan; after living the cosmopolitan life of

ease and travel until he was about thirty, then losing a large part of his fortune in unfortunate speculation, he returned to Italy, and settling in Naples began to write plays. These were well received in a narrow circle, and have been produced by some of the foremost artists, yet, for some reason, fame evaded his grasp. For one thing, he had absolutely no gift and no taste for self-advertisement. His first play, *Semina,* was played by the actress Mariani with éclat; his only play to receive the consecration of print was *Sensitive,* in which De Sanctis appeared. *Red Roses* (*Rose rosse*) had considerable vogue, as did also *The Returning Past* (*Il Passato che torna*), *Three Gardens* (*Tre giardini*). *Susette's Catechism* (*Il catechismo di Susetta*), with which Tina di Lorenzo went on tour, was not an entire success, though it had literary merit. Another play was *Flight of Swallows* (*Volo di rondini*). But, though Borg had this considerable list of plays to his credit, he dropped out of sight for some years until his adaptation of *La Presidentessa* brought him once more into the public eye. *Nude* is his most serious and sustained effort and he shows considerable merit as a psychologist.

Roberto Bracco has achieved the distinction of having several of his plays presented outside of his native land, but they have not had that measure of success that constitutes a good financial investment. This, all too often considered the crowning criterion of success, has been reserved for Dario Niccodemi, two of whose plays have had long and successful runs in America, interpreted by John Drew and Ethel Barrymore. He has been assisted in the English adaptations of his plays by Michael Morton. Niccodemi is the Italian Bernstein; there are reasons

for believing that he writes for the sake of success, with a shrewd eye upon the royalties, with no great purpose, with few ideas. He is, however, unmistakably and typically Italian in his attitude toward conventions and the violation of them and rebellions against them. Ostensibly a feminist of the Bracco type, he endows his heroines with a tremendous power of will, but neither they nor he seem to question the standards by which they are condemned. All this may be taking Niccodemi too seriously. Perhaps he is only trying to write stage plays. He has produced to date *The Refuge* (*Il Rifugio*) (1913), first played in French as *Le Refuge* (1909), and acted by John Drew as *The Prodigal Husband*, which is a foolish bit of conventionality whose success is hard to explain. *The Aigrette* (*L'Aigrette*) is quite as silly, a tale of impoverished nobles, of amorous and financial intrigue, not worthy of serious consideration. *The Sharks* (*I Pescecani*) was a failure in Italy, where it was met with much indifference and some opposition.

The Shadow (*L'Ombra*) (1915) is very much better and falls only a hair's-breadth short of being a good play. Originally written in French for Réjane, who, owing to war conditions, was unable to produce it, *The Shadow* received its première with Ethel Barrymore in the title rôle.

Remnant (*Scàmpolo*), the protagonist of the play of that name, is a young girl, a guttersnipe from the lowest quarter of Paris. She has preserved her honor pure and unsullied through all the wickedness of the life she has lived, and after rescuing a young artist from the clutches of a virago into whose hands he has fallen, marries him and becomes a devoted wife — obviously a bit of sentimental effectivism.

The Enemy (*La Nemica*) treats of the maternal instinct. A stepmother hates her stepson as the usurper of her own son's property and standing and is jealous also of his mental and moral superiority. The boy, however, has a mystic affection for her whom he regards as his real mother. When her own son is killed in the war, she turns to the stepson and lavishes on him all the love she had formerly reserved for the other.

The Titan (*Il Titano*), Niccodemi's latest, is also a war play. He shows the awakening of the social consciousness in Italy since the outbreak of the Great War.

Niccodemi may not be called a great dramatist; and he just misses being a good one by his willingness to be contented with an easy triumph. In the face of a modern world which demands reasoning, which demands illumination, he is content to write stage plays. All his technical skill cannot make up for his deficiency in ideas and his poverty of human observation.

The next four dramatists to be considered hail from three different localities and partake each of the tone and flavor of his native province: Luigi Pirandello is a Sicilian, Sabatino Lopez and Augusto Novelli are Florentines, Alfredo Testoni a Bolognese. They all in a very real sense interpret their localities to the world, for under the surface of local color one finds the universal human appeal which secures them a hearing wherever they may be given. Luigi Pirandello's best work has been done in the novel rather than the drama, but his plays are so good that they cannot be passed over in a history of the contemporary stage. They are the work of a great literary artist and sound psychologist and a keen satirist. He is classed usually as a humorist. But he is such a humorist as

laughs only to keep from weeping at the disillusionments of life and the crudity of existence. Pirandello is entirely Latin in the normal world that he presents, as well as in the abnormal world he constructs. Take, for example, the case of the woman who loves her husband only as father, and who can, therefore, love him only in connection with the child he has had by a mistress (*If not thus* —); or the more striking case of a husband, advanced in years, who prevents his young wife's lover from deserting her (*Just Think, Giacomino!*).

Pirandello was born in Girgente in Sicily in 1867. Having first received a fine training in Italy, he then took his degree with honors in philosophy and philology at the University of Bonn. Returning to his native country, he went to writing and teaching. He has been since 1907 professor in the Istituto Superiore di Magestero Femminile, the woman's higher normal school at Rome. His novels are deservedly popular, even figuring as "best sellers," and his stream of fiction, poetry, and drama has been ample and steady for many years.

His plays number nine or ten, some of them one-act pieces. *The Bite* (*La Morsa*) was his first, followed by the sketch, *Sicilian Limes* (*Lumìe di Sicilia*), a delightful trifle done with delicate and sober touch. *Scamandra, The Doctor's Duty* (*Il Dovero del medico*) and the *Pleasure of Honesty* (*Il Piacere dell' onesta*) are others of the better known of his plays. Since 1914 he has written *If not thus — !* (*Se non così* —) (1914); *At the Door* (*All' uscita*), which he calls *Mistero profano,* and which is a piece of mysticism inspired by the tragedy of the Great War; *Just Think, Giacomino!* (*Pensaci, Giacomino!*), and *Liôla, a commedia campestra.* An analysis of two of

these will seem to indicate what is characteristic in Pirandello's temper and his choice of subject. *If not thus —!* and *Just Think, Giacomino!* are both called comedies, but comedies they are not in the sense that they reflect humor or evoke fun; but they are comedies in the sense that they involve a certain whimsical topsy-turviness, a sort of detached cynicism growing out of the disillusions, the compromises, the failures, and the incongruities of life, — a spectacle that wrings from the chronicler not a bitter smile but a wry one. This is precisely the reaction one might expect in any Sicilian to whom life presents itself as comedy. The Sicilian temperament is essentially tragic. It is sufficient to recall some of the figures of Verga, moving in the spiritual solitude he creates for them, as in a fiery desert, their hearts burning with dark passions and cold with silent bitterness.

That Pirandello leans toward pessimism is due to his race and temperament, his world-weariness controlled and directed by his disciplined intellect. He casts his ideas in the form of sentimental satire, seeing man with his affairs as the object of a half-humorous pity, as a mistaken or perverse child, as the plaything of circumstance and of passions he can neither escape nor control. Pirandello does not wilfully avoid or evade modern problems; they lie well within the margin of some of his plays, but his mind does not concern itself with "isms" and "ologies" and "pathies." So, though he chooses his material from modern life, his work has not the "modern" tinge.

If not thus! is a study of the maternal instinct in a woman who loves in her husband his paternity, not himself. Her attitude is that where the children are, there is the real marriage.

Just Think, Giacomino! Pirandello's last play but one, is not so good as *If not thus* —, but is similar in tone and moral, for with all his cynicism, there is at the bottom of his plays a deposit of kindliness, humanity, gentleness that is almost Tolstoian in its simplicity. The main thing in life is to be good to one another, as fellow-travelers in a vale of tears. Such, at least, is the philosophy of the old provincial professor of natural history, who marries a fallen girl in order to save her honor and give the child a home as well as to have companionship in his old age. The new ethical point of view and the acuteness of analysis make *Just Think, Giacomino!* an intensely interesting piece of psychology; the profound kindliness of its protagonist and his unconditional human solution of a vexed question make it good drama.

The Tuscan Sabatino Lopez is more Gallic than Italian in his work, following in the footsteps of Paul Hervieu and his Italian prototype, Butti, in writing *Le théâtre cruel,* that drama which claims to be devoid of pity and praise as it is of hatred and condemnation. Like so many other recent writers, Lopez began his career as a disciple of the doctrine of impassibility in art — the claim that the only important thing is truth. "One should always take his point of departure in the true," he writes. "Without the truth, nothing is worth while." But Lopez has not the logical, far-reaching mind of a Hervieu. He does not, on the other hand, give us "human nature in the raw", but glosses it over with a gentle varnish of semi-Giacosan *bonhommie;* Tonelli attributes to him, "La serena indulgente bonta giacosana." In every other respect, however, Lopez differs from the author of *As the*

Leaves, Giacosa's dramas having nothing in common with those of the *Théâtre cruel* school.

Like Pirandello and Camillo Antona-Traversi, Lopez is of the intellectuals, a doctor of letters and a professor. He was born at Leghorn in 1867, educated in Italy and is dramatic critic of the famous review, *Il Secolo XIX.* He gave himself early to literature, his first play dating from 1889, *Ariana,* a comedy. *By Night* (*Di notte*) (1890) was played successfully in Paris by the Théâtre International d'art in 1902; *The Secret* (*Il segreto*) (1894) may be taken as typical of his early manner. It is in one act, a form to which Lopez is much addicted, and savors of the Grand Guignol "shocker." *The Secret* was awarded a prize by the minister of public instruction! It is the play of a young man, promising rather than satisfying. He depicts manners and morals that would be intolerable anywhere in real life. Nevertheless, there is undoubted power in the situation and cleverness in the dialogue.

In later plays he has diluted the "cruelty" and the impassibility of his earlier dramatic theory with a large admixture of human kindness. The passive resistance of the public to the purely disagreeable has performed its function and his plays have responded. Caterina, *The Good Girl,* has been unhappy in love, has fled to Rome, and there become the mistress of a politician. Her own former lover (in the English sense) is paying court to her sister, an innocent little country girl. Through her cleverness and sisterly affection, The Good Girl overcomes the opposition of the young man's parents and sees the two happily married and dowried. Though the play is not coherent in plot, it is a fine consistent bit of characterization. The various *milieux,* too, peasant, political,

bourgeois, in which the action goes on, are composed of first-hand impressions.

The Beast and the Beauties (*Il Brutto e le belle*) (1910) is worth dwelling on for a moment. Ferrante is the Beast. Ugly, he is at the same time an accomplished Don Juan. He can make love to any woman any time, he claims, not by flattery but by frankness and brutality. He is eminently successful *jusqu'au dernier point exclusivement*, as Rabelais would say, for the women cannot bear his face — he is too homely! The details of the play are most amusing. *The Beast and the Beauties* was written for Zacconi and bears the imprint of its origin. The minor characters, the old Republican patriot, the Beast's young ward, the three ladies, the handsome young beaux of Rome, are convincingly lifelike. The scene is laid in a Roman pension.

Every Man for Himself (*La nostra pelle*) (1912) was followed by *The Hurricane* (*L' Ouragan*) (1913), written in French. *The Third Husband* (*Il Terzo marito*) (1913) is Lopez's only thesis play. In this he attacks the prejudice against divorcees and against the re-marriage of widows. In 1915 he wrote *The Tangle* (*Il Viluppo*), a return to the *théâtre cruel* of his younger days, a study of the jealousy of a husband which lasts even beyond the grave and finds a new victim in a child of his dead wife. It strikes a note not common in Italian drama in making its hero a man of big business, an engineer. Lopez's last play is *Mario e Maria* (1916).

Lopez is not in any sense strictly Italian, but rather cosmopolitan. Except for details of local color, and, to a limited extent, of national types, *The Good Girl* or *The Tangle* might have been written by a Frenchman. Au-

gusto Novelli, on the other hand, is intensely Italian and Florentine. Born in Florence in 1867, he has lived and worked there all his life. He is to Florence what Salvatore di Giacomo is to Naples. First as student, then journalist, then municipal councilor, he has had an opportunity of studying his native city from A to Z, of which he has taken the fullest advantage. Nobody knows his Florence as does Novelli, — not only the nobility but the lowest classes, indeed the latter best of all. Novelli is the acme, the representative true to type, the epitome of all that is Florentine. He is a sublimated George Cohan, for, taking his material from everyday life and current events, as does the American, he weaves it into his plays, — better plays it must be granted than Cohan makes. He has another side to him to be more deeply reckoned with. He is capable of writing serious historical plays which have genuine value as re-creations of his city's past. But most of his plays are scenes from current Florentine life presented in Florentine dialect. It is, indeed, a pity that he does not write in pure Italian for the larger public of the whole peninsula, but he prefers to make a local appeal, and in this he is justified if local success and popularity can justify an artist in refusing to widen his circle of influence. Night after night and season after season the Florentines crowd to the Teatro Alfieri to view a new comedy of Novelli. His fecundity, too, is astonishing, producing a steady stream of dramas, historical plays, farces, and comedies, revealing a seemingly inexhaustible reserve of situation, of humor, and of character. With the simplest situation, by means of his infallible eye for character and his keen sense of fun, he can produce a ripping farce or a refreshing comedy of manners. We

rock with laughter at *Still Waters*, over the spectacle of a young country swell reading Dante to a cabman's family, or a reporter trying to make news out of the embarrassing situation of the same family. Novelli is the Florentine Labiche.

He began with writing plays to delight his fellow-townsmen almost thirty years ago, his first play being *Love on the House Tops* (*L'Amore sui tetti*) (1891), followed in the next year by a serious play, *Mantegna* (1897), which is curiously close in plot and character to Giacosa's *As the Leaves*. Another serious play *Afterwards* (*Dopo*) received a government prize and was played by Ermete Novelli. He shows in this play the terrible consequences of a *delitto di sangue*. Since that time, he has written more than thirty plays, which may be divided into three classes, — serious dramas of the type of *Mantegna*, historical plays of which *The Cupola* is a good instance, and comedies of Florentine life like the famous *Still Waters*, *The Lady of the Fourth Page* (*La Signorina della quarta pagina*) (1901); *Old Heroes* (*Vechi Eroi*) (1906); *The Line Viareggio — Pisa — Roma* (*Linea Viareggio — Pisa — Roma*) (1910), or the popular Florentine scenes in *Purgatorio, Inferno, e Paradiso* (1908). In this third division is to be found his characteristic work.

Novelli is at home and expert in the historical play, of which we shall let *The Cupola* and *Canapone* stand as examples. *The Cupola* is an evocation of Florence of the fifteenth century. Novelli has taken an incident from Vasari's *Lives of Painters* and has expanded it with a wealth of erudition and power of assimilation one would not suspect in the author of *Still Waters*. It is the story of the building of the dome of the Cathedral

which Filippo Brunelleschi, after being sneered at by the Syndics, finally accomplished by piling up a huge mound of earth and then constructing his scaffolding on top of that. Novelli involves a love story with this historic material. Every incident, every property, almost every speech he justifies historically, by documents from Florentine archives. These historical bricks he cements into a unified whole with a mortar of dramatic imagination, so that he makes of *The Cupola* a first-rate historical comedy. With all its wealth of local color, its appeal to local tradition, written as it is in Florentine dialect, the play loses much by being seen off its native heath.

In *Canapone*, the other historical play to be discussed, he places the action in the middle of the nineteenth century, the time of the Revolution, when the Austrians and their sympathizers were finally expelled. The action centers about the person of the Archduke Leopold II of Tuscany, nicknamed *White Beard* (*Canapone*). A good plain bourgeois sort of ruler, he foresees the revolution and sympathizes with it, but is unable through inertia and lack of intelligence to ward it off or forestall it. He goes off after a bloodless revolt to Vienna, there to await his restoration to his throne. It is an excellent picture of this old fellow, good but stupid, and of the events which led to the independence of Tuscany. It evokes, too, the remarkable spirit of these exciting days, full of enthusiasm for the nation coming into being, full of high nationalistic idealism.

The greater part of Novelli's work has been in the field of popular comedies. His first play, *Love on the House Tops*, is of this sort, — a pleasing bit, showing a new and different *milieu*, displaying a knowledge of the difficult

art of imparting gaiety to an audience, which gives promise of great things. Among the best known of his comedies are *The Snail* (*La chiocciola*) (1901); *Old Heroes; Lippi's Virgins* (*Le Vergini del Lippi*) (1901); *Still Waters; L' aqua passata* (untranslatable, it comes from the proverb, *Aqua passata non macina più*) (1908); *Home, Home!* (*Casa mia, Casa mia*) (1910); *The Changeling* (*Il Morticino*) (1910); *Invited to Dinner* (*Invitato a pranzo*) (1910), and such *pièce d'occasion* as the war play, *La Kultureide* (1906). While each has its peculiar merit and its individual differentiation, they are not so essentially unlike that an analysis of one will not serve to characterize all. The best known, *Still Waters*, will serve best. One is impressed always with the tenuousness of situation and intrigue, the mere nothings out of which, with a pinch of irony, a spoonful of good humor and a lot of knowledge of human nature, Novelli concocts a first-rate comedy of manners.

In *Still Waters* it is the family of a Florentine cabman, who rejoices in the significant appellation of Ulysses, who are shown in their daily life. There are two daughters in the family and two claimants for their hands, — one a lodger, a pretentious young man of morals none too strict; the other a carpenter whose suit is frowned upon by the family. The younger daughter is planning to elope with the lodger; the carpenter, coming to visit his sweetheart, has been surprised and has concealed himself in a tree in the garden, from which vantage point he overhears the plan for the elopement. To save the girl, he gets the young couple arrested as burglars. To the parents, wild over the disappearance of their girl, enter the carpenter. If they consent to his marriage with the elder daughter,

he will produce the culprits unscathed. They finally consent, he has the pair released, the family is reunited, and the lodger gets his deserts. The explanations occur in the presence of a reporter from the daily paper, *La Fieramosca*, who is resolved to make news of it. As may be seen, it verges upon the farcical, all of it, but is saved by a lot of legitimate comedy.

There remains for our consideration the Bolognese comedian, Alfredo Testoni, whose success throughout Italy has been greater than Novelli's, though his local reputation cannot equal the Florentine's. Testoni partakes of the qualities both of Roberto Bracco and Giannino Antona-Traversi, but adds to them a rollicking sense of fun which makes him very pleasant to meet in the somewhat melancholy environs of the modern Italian drama. The smile of a Bracco, a Lopez, or a Pirandello is a wry one. Only Novelli and Testoni bring out the good hearty laugh that expands the girth and quickens the blood. They have the wit and intelligence to be farcical, they are even clever enough to be nonsensical. And these are gifts rarer in the South than in the more whimsical and capricious North. His worst plays, like *Living Quietly* (*In quieto vivere*), are those in which he expounds a thesis; his best those where he is unaffectedly natural without *arrière pensée*, without his veil of sadness or melancholy, free from all bitterness, those in which he is content to laugh and live.

Testoni was born in 1867 at Modena, but has lived all his life in Bologna. He early wrote dialect poetry, but, failing to please in this form, turned to the drama, where he was well received from the first. *That Certain Something!* (*Quel non so che!*) (190–) was much applauded,

Between two Pillows (*Fra due guanciali*) (1904) is characteristic. It is as frothy an intrigue as can be imagined, and incarnates Testoni's Italy, amoral, vain, light, satisfied with life as it is, looking upon events, not from their grave moral side, but from the side of their diverting accidents and incongruities.

Discipline (*Ordinanza*), a piece in one act, is woven of different texture. An orderly loves the daughter of his colonel, but acts as messenger between her and her fiancé, a lieutenant of his regiment. The private performs this duty with heroic self-abnegation. *Living Quietly* is on the theme that there must be equilibrium in married life — either a *ménage à deux* or *à quatre*, never a *ménage à trois*. *Duchessina*, *In automobile*, and *The Spark* (*La scintilla*) are other plays. *The Model* (*La Modella*) shows the vampire woman in action.

Like all the other moderns, Testoni has tried his hand at historical comedy. His *Cardinale Lambertini*, as played by Zacconi, has held the boards now for many years. The protagonist was an actual person who flourished in Bologna in the seventeenth century. Through a light and amorous intrigue, we follow the delightful frivolous old priest.

A word must be said of Testoni's delightful nonsense in the volume of *Piccolo Teatro*, made up of brilliant and impossible *saynètes*, exquisite gems of ridiculousness. Some are in verse, — real nonsense verse, like *A game — at sea!* (*Una partita — in mare*); others in prose like *The Psychiatric Expert* (*Il perito psichiatra*), which he calls *scena poco scientifico*. The best aside from these two are the delightful parodies, *In the Train* (*In treno*); *The Hygienic Expert* (*L'Igienista*); *L' acqua passata non macina*

più (untranslatable), and the *Scientific-humanitarian Book Store* (*Il libraio scientifico-umanitario*). Besides these works in Italian, Testoni has written in Bolognese dialect *The Servant* (*El Seruv*), *Parrot, what time is it?* (*Pappagal, ch' our è'*) and *Quel che paga l' olio* (another untranslatable proverbial expression) which shows, by the way, a remarkable similarity to Gerolamo Rovetta's *Dishonest Men.*

Testoni's plays, distinctly meant to be seen and heard, submit even less readily than other plays to the cold analysis of the armchair. They are distinguished for their *brio,* their good humor and fun, but are empty of ideas. We laugh, but leave the theatre unsatisfied. His is *par excellence* the drama of amusement, but he has one solid virtue: he represents the side of Italian realism which studies the lighter side of life and the lighter classes of society. He is Rabelais and Giannino Antona-Traversi in miniature.

The dramatists who are at present writing are so many that only a few can be picked for special mention, making the choice as characteristic as possible. Ugo Ojetti (b. 1871), more famous as critic, has done some plays: *A Pink* (*Un Garofano*); *The Uselessness of Evil* (*L' inutilità del male*); *All for Love* (*Tutto per l' amore*). Silvario Zambaldi's (b. 1870) *The Doctor's Wife* (*La Moglie del dottore*), a study of a woman sterile through an operation, who ardently desires motherhood, is his only permanently successful attempt.

This list of the younger generation of playwrights, though incomplete, is, it may be hoped, representative. Though their work constitute a small proportion of contemporaneous theatrical production, it is typical. And

when one has mentioned Benelli, Moschino, Tumiati, Boïto, Cesareo, Calvi, Oliva, Borg, Niccodemi, Pirandello, Lopez, Novelli, Testoni, Ojetti, and Zambaldi, one has named those who stand out as prominent in the present-day Italian drama.

CHAPTER IX

Futurism and Other Isms

It is obvious that the study of contemporary Italian drama resolves itself on the theoretical side into a study of successive, sometimes simultaneous isms. As early as 1889 Capuana named a book of literary criticism *Gli smi contemporanei.* It could hardly be otherwise in any modern literature, since the general distribution of ideas and modes and the constant circulation of criticism and artistic theory make the whole world self-conscious and sensitive to the changing order. Therefore with the drama in Italy we have passed from Romanticism to Neo-Romanticism, to realism, to verism, to naturalism, to psychologism.

There are critics who insist that these categories have been borrowed from France and foisted upon Italy, that the Italian theatre did not pass through any orderly development which would make the impression of a steady progression from ism to ism. It is quite true that in Italy it is not possible, as it is possible in France, to draw distinct lines between the varieties; they shade into one another and overlap, the same artist expressing himself in more than one of the styles. But the categories do apply in the main, and if we are to grasp intelligently the works of the dramatists, if we are to handle them adequately,

and especially if we are to put them into the perspective of the world's dramatic art, it is convenient if not necessary to adopt the *clichés* of the accepted schools and to avail ourselves of the convenient pigeonholes provided by the familiar categories.

Psychologism does not close the "ismology." There are two others that have followed, — æstheticism and futurism. The former, so far as it is an ism, that is to say, a conscious programme, is a reaction, one might say a revulsion against the baldness and bareness of a thoroughgoing realism in favor of beauty, of warmth, of decoration. It is as a practice embodied in the work of Pascoli, in that super-dilettante, Gabriele D'Annunzio, and in that of a few of their disciples. For the dogma "Art for art's sake" they substitute "Life for art's sake"; existence is æsthetic reaction; experience the titillation of the senses, the prosecution of sensation; art the translation of this experience into some form that will set up the corresponding sensuous reactions in the beholder. As a corollary to this quest for beauty, they turn from modern problems, from the present with its intellectual and social urgencies, to the past, or to a mystic invented world. It was easy for D'Annunzio and his disciples to turn backward in their search for beauty and glory, since the worship of the national past is so universal in Italy. "Our glorious past, the glories of Italy's history", — these are phrases to conjure with among these fervent poets who see in themselves the heritors of the "grandeur that was Rome." The presence of monuments and collections and the stream of pilgrims from all the rest of the world in a never-ending procession of exclamatory admiration, — these things have united to nourish in the Italians this worship of their own former

greatness. D'Annunzio turned to the past because in that field he found freedom for the expression of his unhuman dreams of beauty and of power.

This "glorious" Italian past is the fruitful source of hundreds of dramas, a source visited not only by D'Annunzio, but by Benelli, Bracco, Rovetta, Cossa, Manzoni; practically every modern dramatist has raked over the dead leaves in the shadowy valleys of bygone Italian history.

Futurism, from the first moment vociferous, is the reaction against æstheticism in all its aspects but especially in its preoccupation with history. This cult of the past in Italy explains the fact that there and there alone futurism has offered a passionate programme and has aroused a burning protest. Æstheticism is out of contact with life; futurism clamors for a direct and vital relation between art and life as it is, modern, industrial, wealthy, hectic. The spirit the futurists would exorcise is that of D'Annunzio, the perennial the ever-recurring dilettante. "The movement, being largely a reaction, was largely a merely negative manifestation. The attitude was: Since the *Passatisti* was obvious, we will be obscure; since they were grandiloquent with faith, we will struggle from wrong to despair and beyond. Since with them sexual matters were more or less fig-leafed, we will trace the minutes and seconds of our sexual sophistication. . . . Above all we will hate the bourgeoisie."

Futurism as a movement first came to public notice about 1908 when the novel *Mafarka the Futurist* was suppressed and its author, F. T. Marinetti, prosecuted at Milan for offending against the manners and morals of the community. His trial was the occasion of a demonstration.

Among others who spoke in Marinetti's favor was the veteran critic and dramatist, Luigi Capuana. The trial resulted in a triumphant acquittal for Marinetti, who was carried off by his friends shouting "Long live Futurism." Soon after appeared in the Paris *Figaro* the manifesto of the new school, a curiously eloquent and logical document in which, allowing for the element of *réclame* and a certain bid for notoriety, one may find a summary of the tenets of the new school.

It is the cult of energy and modernity. Speed is their supreme beauty. "A racing automobile is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace." Under the vigorous futurist massage Italy is to lose her intellectual and moral flabbiness brought on by a passive contemplation of the past in place of an active participation in the present. "Her works of art and museums she shall sell and shall purchase in their place cannon, aeroplanes, dreadnoughts, and dirigibles. Venice shall be blown into atoms, Rome shall be cleansed of her ruins and remnants. Make way for factories, fortifications and machines." Force is to rule the world, all the latest inventions of human ingenuity are to be directed toward material progress. Even poetry is to be "a violent assault against unknown forces to summon them to lie down at the feet of man." Finally, "they would destroy museums, libraries and fight against moralism, feminism and all utilitarian cowardice!" In a word, the futurist repudiates at the same time history and art in the name of the present and the real.

The futurists have invaded nearly every realm of art, — literature, painting, sculpture and music. Architecture they have not yet attempted; here the necessity for utility has probably discouraged their peculiar experiments. In

the other arts they have introduced striking innovations. In music, for example, the orchestra has been augmented by instruments to reproduce the sound of rain, of automobiles, of railway trains, the roar of factories in operation, and by *rombatore, gorgoliatore, fischiatore, scrocciatore* and others.

The futurists of the Manifesto are playing with everything they touch. Life is a great game, a huge joke, even the most serious things being made occasion for sport and gaiety. Sickness and sorrow are subjects for jest; the hospital patients, for example, are to be dressed in fantastic costumes, painted in hideous and ludicrous wise to excite the laughter of fellow patients; funerals are to be made over into masked processions; churches shall be turned into drinking rooms, bars, roller-skating rinks, theatres, Turkish baths; against every sorrow one must take a dose of joy. Their programme for the conduct of life is to them, as to us, a colossal joke, but nevertheless there runs through it "a certain wild reasonableness which makes us take it, if with some amusement, at least also with some seriousness."

In their reform of the arts, the futurists have not forgotten the theatre, — the manifesto containing a programme for the rehabilitation of the drama. "We have a profound disgust for the contemporary theatre (verse, prose, and music) because it wavers stupidly between historic reconstruction (a pastiche or a plagiarism) and the photographic reproduction of our daily life." On the other hand we assiduously frequent the Theatre of Varieties (music halls, *cafés-chantants* or equestrian circuses) which to-day offer the only theatrical spectacles worthy of a truly futuristic spirit. "Why the Variety

theatre?" one may ask. The reply in summary is this. It has no traditions to hamper it; it is under the necessity of exciting and pleasing by continually more wonderful feats of strength and skill, wit and intelligence; the public takes part in the action by accompanying the orchestra, communicating with the actor with unexpected quips and extravagant dialogue and the like, and finally it destroys unwholesome traditions. "It is an instructive school of sincerity for the male because it strips from the woman all veils, all the phrases, the sighs, the romantic sobs which deform and mask her. It brings into prominence, instead, all the admirable animal qualities of the woman, her powers of seduction, of capture, of perfidy and of resistance. It systematically depreciates ideal love and the romantic obsession, which has repeated to satiety, with the monotony and automaticity of a daily business, the nostalgic langours of passion. It extravagantly mechanises sentiment, depreciates and healthily scorns the obsession of carnal possession, abases voluptuousness to the natural function, deprives it of all mystery, of all anguish and of all anti-hygienic idealism"; and finally the Variety Theatre attacks the fundamentals of the drama as it is now conceived. "It destroys the Solemn, the Sacred, the Serious, the Sublime of Art with a capital A. It collaborates in the futurist destruction of the immortal masterpieces, plagiarising them, parodying them, presenting them just anyhow, without scenery and without compunction, just as an ordinary 'turn.' We approve unconditionally the execution of *Parsifal* in forty minutes which is in preparation for a large London music hall."

But even the variety theatre does not completely satisfy

the futurists. It, too, has its traditional characters and its beaten tracks which must be avoided. It is necessary "to exaggerate notably its extravagance, to multiply contrast and to make the improbable and the absurd reign as sovereigns on the stage." Certain practical suggestions are: "Oblige the singers to paint their bare necks, arms and especially their hair in all the colors hitherto neglected as a means of seduction — green hair, violet arms, azure breast, orange chignon, etc. Interrupt the singer, making her continue with revolutionary or anarchistic discourse. Sprinkle a romanza with insults and bad words. Make the spectators of the pit, the boxes, and the gallery take part in the action. Here are a few additional suggestions: put strong glue on some of the stalls, so that the spectator, man or woman, who remains glued down, may arouse general hilarity; sell the same place to ten different people; hence obstructions, arguments and altercations. Sprinkle the stalls with powders which produce itching, sneezing, etc." Here end the constructive suggestions of the manifesto, but some of its destructive recommendations are: "Systematically prostitute all classic art upon the stage, representing for example all the Greek, French and Italian tragedies condensed and comically mixed up. Enliven the works of Beethoven, Wagner, *et al.* by introducing into them Neapolitan songs. Execute a Beethoven symphony backwards, beginning with the last note. Reduce Shakespeare to a single act, etc. Encourage in every way the *genre* of the American eccentrics, their effects of exalting grotesque, of terrifying dynamism, their clumsy finds, their enormous brutalities, their waistcoats full of surprises and their pantaloons deep as the holds of ships, from which issue forth, with thou-

sands of other things, the great futurist hilarity which is to rejuvenate the face of the world."

This is not to be taken seriously in detail. Yet these suggestions, grotesque and insane as some of them seem, cannot be dismissed as unimportant. They are only the *reductio ad absurdum* of a legitimate and righteously bitter protest against existing drama, weighed down under the incubus of various isms and ologies, sinking under the weight of traditions outworn, staggering with the burden of stardom and commercialism, ignoring reality or foolishly subservient to it.

Other writers suggest other means of redemption. Gordon Craig looks to the marionettes, D'Annunzio suggests the cinematograph, but the futurists advise the amplification of vaudeville. The movement and its doctrines are an Italian counterpart of the German *Ueberbrettl* movement of the early 1900's.

Although Futurism is by no means a one-man movement, F. T. Marinetti is its founder and prime mover; he is now, however, repudiated by one wing. It was he who issued the manifesto and who has given the world the typical futurist plays. *The Bleeding Mummy* (*La Momie Sanglante — poème dramatique*) and better still *King Hubbub* (*Il Re Baldoria*) (1909), which almost created a riot when it was played at Lugné-Poë's Théâtre de l'Œuvre in 1909. It is a huge farce, a satire of a materialistic régime and "especially a grandiose caricature of parliamentarism." The action passes "in the kingdom of the Block-heads at a vaguely medieval epoch."

King Baldoria is chosen King because he is the fattest. His Kingdom is occupied solely with eating, and as the

play opens the women are all leaving because it is too gross for them. The people are starved that the King and his councillors may feast, so that when his chief councillor dies, they are on the verge of revolt. The King gives over his government to four Marmitons who retire into the palace to prepare a new broth called Universal Happiness. While they are waiting, however, the King dies of hunger and the people, maddened by the smell of cooking, break into the palace, and not satisfied with the watery stuff the Marmitons are cooking, devour the cooks themselves. From this point the farce becomes quite incomprehensible, but finally everybody dies and a baby vampire sucks their blood.

This, as nearly as it can be extricated, is the "plot" of *King Hubbub*, but three or four others might be equally well derived from the amorphous mass. The only sane person is the idealistic poet, the Idiot, who harangues the people from the top of a tree whither he has been chased by the mob.

Marinetti together with Bruno Corra, Emilio Settimelli, G. Boccioni, and E. Corradini are *the* only futurist dramatists who have printed plays; most of the group have confined themselves to verse. Even Signor Marinetti has, in the expressive German phrase, cooked better than he has eaten. His theory far outstrips in daring his practice. Just because his creed is so extravagant, he has been obliged, using another famous German phrase, to treat it as a scrap of paper. But his theory is almost comprehensible, while his giant farce is a whirling jumble of sense and nonsense, sanity and insanity. Futurist drama, if there could be a positive creation based on this programme of negations, seems to promise little.

But as a leaven for the heavy lump of the dramatic future this protest has real value.

The fundamental idea of the movement called the Art Theatre as it has taken shape in Germany, France, Russia and England is, as in the case of all movements, partly new creative impulse and partly reaction and protest. It was in its inception an appeal for the cultivation and utilization of the plastic and pictorial, as well as the literary side of drama. The realistic theatre had gone to the final dismal extreme in the matter of inartistic settings — not an artist, but a furniture shop designed the sets — oh, true to life perchance, but false to art, and traitor to beauty! The actors sat and talked, or walked and talked; in a certain play of Strindberg's, two men in ordinary frock coats sat beside a stove, a hideous north-Europe porcelain stove, and talked for three quarters of an hour, — penetrating, analytic talk, to be sure, but leaving much to be desired as dramatic spectacle. Northern actors needed to be trained in the use of their bodies for the interpretation of emotion; northern audiences needed to be taught to appreciate and to demand artistic beauty in the stage spectacle; dancing as dramatic art needed to reassert its claim; color, light, shadow, surface, space, fabric waited to be utilized in the emotional ensemble of the stage.

This indicates in outline the idea promulgated and made familiar to students of the stage by Gordon Craig, the prime mover in the art theatre. In Italy, to be sure, there was not precisely the same need for these changes. The Italian actor has always been facile and eloquent in the use of his body; with all Italians gesture is the twin sister of language and posture the instinctive interpretation of

emotion. Audiences trained in the vivacious and expressive acting of the *Commedia dell'Arte*, their eyes filled from day to day with the masterpieces of Italian architecture, with the frescos of Michelangelo, of Raphael, of Tintoretto, of Veronese, with the picturesque, one might say pictorial Italian landscape, with the formal and beautiful ritual of the church, having a love of a show, both instinctive and handed down from Roman times, and a musical ear, — such audiences do not need training from the ground up in the appreciation of drama as a spectacle. A theatre on the lines of Reinhardt's Deutsches Theatre or his Kammerspiel, or the Art Theater in Moscow could not perform in Italy the same important function that they have performed in their own countries. In Italy, then, as might be expected, the art-theatre attempts have been sporadic and not entirely successful. Gordon Craig, living in Florence, has maintained a house of his own where worshippers at his shrine, a bit hectic and showing things artistic a bit out of proportion, gather to witness esoteric performances in all languages. But for the most part the movement in Italy has taken the sound and hopeful form of bettering conditions in the existing theatres. And as has been said in another connection, conditions in existing Italian theatres need bettering, for in some ways the properties, scenery and other material appointments of the Italian commercial theatres are the worst in the world. The old shabby theatres themselves, the poverty of the individual companies, the frequent packings and journeyings all helped the general shabbiness of the theatrical belongings. The Italians, to be sure, are content with less elaborate scenic illusion than other audiences, perhaps just because their imaginations are

trained on beauty elsewhere. But we may say that the technical art theatre has not arrived in Italy.

And so with Futurism we close the list of isms and reach the pinnacle of modernity; and with the Art-Theatre movement we come to the end of the "movements" by which the Italian drama has passed from point to point, having examined in our progress many dramas and encountered many dramatists. Preliminary to an attempt at a final summary it would seem well to bring into closer juxtaposition some of the facts and ideas treated in the separate chapters of our discussion. Oliver Wendell Holmes's whimsical verdict that for certain physical maladies the doctor should have been called three hundred years ago has a scientific basis as true for criticism as for medicine; to understand and to place the phenomena we encounter to-day we must take into account certain important seedtimes of the past. A brief run through the last hundred years of Italian drama will clarify and organize our impressions of the contemporary period.

The Italian theatre received an immense impulse in the eighteenth century from Goldoni and Alfieri, the one deriving his inspiration from the classics and producing noble plays in the classic mood, the other glorifying the popular drama into a wonderful native comedy. These two launched the drama on a noble course, but by way of launching it endowed Italy with a highly artificial art, genuinely eighteenth century in its conception and working out. Beautiful it was but rhetorical and out of contact with the real world. The business of the romanticists who followed was to clear the stage of the débris of old systems, of artificial obstructions and to make way for the free expression of individual emotion. The ancient

taboos in technic and subject-matter seemed deadening and useless to Manzoni, Niccolini, Vincenzo Monti, Silvio Pellico and the Pindemonte brothers; their god was Shakespeare, interpreted or rather misinterpreted in the Italian manner. His heroism, his mysticism, his gigantic qualities became so many fetishes. New characteristics invaded the drama, the subject-matter derived from the Middle Ages, patriotism, vague humanitarianism, the timid precursor of the later interests in social problems; more serious attention to local color and chronism. But we must decide that they were greatest in their lyric qualities and that their plays are better as poems than as dramas.

The next generation of playwrights, those of the mid-century, bridged the gap between dying romanticism and nascent realism. They continued the reforms of their immediate predecessors, but they expanded and heightened them always in the direction of modernity; when they reconstitute a bygone epoch, it is with authentic and authenticated details; social problems came under discussion in Giacometti's *Civil Death;* contemporary life is mirrored in his *Poet and the Dancing Girl,* in Ferrari's *Prose* and *The Duel,* and in Torelli's *Husbands.* But Neo-Romanticism is typically represented rather by Leopold Marenco with his medieval, sentimental tales of romantic love and chivalry, by Felice Cavalotti, who followed in Marenco's footsteps, and perhaps best of all by Pietro Cossa, who in his reincarnations and reinterpretations of antiquity stands head and shoulders above his contemporaries. Eminently a man of the theatre, he was also a dramatic thinker of importance. Truth became a battle-cry with him, — truth to history. His

Nero is documented from one end to the other. But Neo-Romanticism was stillborn, and not even the talent of Giuseppe Giacosa could breathe life into its death-smitten members. His earlier medieval dramas, *The Game of Chess*, *The Red Count*, *The Brothers-in-Arms*, and the rest, are at one and the same time the culminating point and the swan song of expiring Neo-Romanticism.

About the middle of the eighties a triple influence began to make itself felt in the drama: that of the French realists, Dumas *fils* and Emile Augier; that of the Verists, the Sicilian writers Verga and Capuana; and that of Henrik Ibsen.

The realistic school has produced many of the best things in the drama. Giacosa's masterpieces were written under their impulse — *As the Leaves*, notably; Bracco, too, derived inspiration from this Gallic fount. The Frenchmen gave sanction and justification to the new tendency to make the stage a laboratory for social experiment if not a lecture platform for social theory; they contributed largely to the foundation of the new thesis drama. But the future lay with Verism. Many worked in this so fertile field, but it was Giuseppe Giacosa who brought home the harvest, who in plain words established the ideas and the methods of the Verists on the actual stage, producing in *Sad Loves* one of those photographic, unsparing studies that embody the ultimate plea of the Verists, at the same time presenting a good, interesting and actable play. The work of this group cannot be better stated than in the words of Benedetto Croce: "They tried in novels, tales and dramas to represent objectively what place men hold in hard reality, human passions without veils and without fantastic transfigurations, the

real conditions of the different social classes and the different regions of Italy; and they dreamed of joining art with science in tales, novels and scientific dramas, built on observation, on experiment and on 'human documents.' Certainly their programme was a mistake. Science and art are irreconcilable, not because they are averse to each other but diverse. And their work was anything but objective, their representation of life anything but complete, rather eminently one-sided; man was abased to an animal, society to a pack of wild beasts fighting each other for prey, food, and women. Few of these Verists had sufficient creative force to attain the artistic heaven. But granted their illusion, what honesty of purpose on the part of both the greatest and the smallest; what honest efforts to realize in reality their dream! Whoever will glance over the volumes of the Verist school — if he is often offended at the candors of perceptions not yet translated into art — never loses contact with reality and life." None of the writers who came after the Verists could ignore their theory and their accomplishment. They might lay emphasis on other things, on history, or on *milieux*, or on psychological observation, but their criterion was the criterion of the Verists and of all modern art, — life.

As to the third influence, that of Henrik Ibsen, the great Norwegian could not make the appeal in emotional Italy that he made in more intellectual northern countries. The snows clinging to the hoary top of this mountain peak chilled the susceptible Latin natures. They never understood him as a philosopher, though they appreciated his superlative ability as dramatic technician, and his supreme logic found in them a sympathetic response.

The play of psychological analysis along Ibsenite lines became the fashion.

Gerolamo Rovetta wrote both romantic-historical dramas in the style of *Romanticism*, and ultra-realistic contemporary plays of which *Dorina's Trilogy* is the signal example. Marco Praga is psychologically inclined and interprets his master Ibsen to an Italian clientèle. The women dramatists, Amalia Rosselli and Teresah Ubertis, are even more inclined toward the Ibsenian intro-analysis and in *A Soul* and *The Judge* produced two notable plays in the master's manner. Butti represents a French and Norwegian tendency tempered by Italian qualities, his masterpiece, the trilogy of *The Atheists*, discussing in essentially modern fashion the relation between science and faith. The Antona-Traversi brothers, Camillo and Giannino, follow Praga's lead, but the latter adds lightness of wit and delicacy of touch in treating the upper classes, braced and stiffened by a fierce irony worthy of Parini.

Roberto Bracco began under the influence of Dumas *fils*, Ibsen and Becque. A little later Hauptmann was added to his models. Like the Antona-Traversis, his range of subject-matter extends from the highest to the lowest social level, from *The Unfaithful Woman* to *Don Pietro Caruso*. He even concerned himself with the social problems which modern Italy must grapple.

Alfredo Oriani, Dario Niccodemi, S. Zambaldi, Washington Borg, Sabatino Lopez, Alfredo Testoni, Luigi Pirandello and Augusto Novelli, — these are the names of playwrights distinguished among the younger men, who while they have not added anything signal to the drama either in theory or practice, have immensely enriched it

in local color and specific instances. Since the beginning of the Great War there has been no change in the dramatic situation; all the first-rate men have been silent or producing plays written before the conflagration. The host of war plays which have sprung up have been marked rather by a superficial emotional appeal than a sound dramatic merit. Apart from the stream, related to it chiefly as revulsion from its principles and revolt against its technic, stand the æsthetic dramatists, led of course by D'Annunzio, the *divo Gabriele* of his compatriots, who carries over into drama the fame he won in other literary fields, whose overweening personality, whose vast erudition, whose amazing virtuosity and more lately whose fiery and audacious nationalism constitute him so interesting a figure that it is all imputed to him for dramatic righteousness. Following in his train is a large discipleship of poetic dramatists, of whom Sem Benelli is a better playwright though a less important literary artist than his master. At the moment the future of Italian poetry drama would seem to lie with Benelli, though his latest plays have not quite kept the promise of his early successes.

Such is the long, rich roll of names, titles, movements, isms, influences. Are there some crystallizing principles that run through the whole mass? Are there certain banks that channel the currents into a common stream? Can we find certain features that bring it to pass that it is not only drama, but Italian drama? Inevitably the dramatic writing of Italy partakes of the characteristic qualities of all Italian literature. On the general aspects of modern literature in Italy both Arthur Livingston and Bendetto Croce have written so illuminatingly that

we cannot do better than to accept their guidance. Livingston speaks of three characteristics found in all recent Italian literature: a certain national even nationalistic spirit becoming in many cases localism; sentimentality, by which the Italian means "tenderness of heart, responsiveness to shades of feeling, sympathy with other people — what Americans call humanity"; and as a third characteristic, Catholic idealism. Croce names as a further quality its *insincerità*, by which he means lack of conviction about anything, — an "insincerity" due first to the neo-Catholic and pragmatic reaction against the worshipped rationalizing the deified logic of the philosophy that flowed from Kant and Fichte, due to the denial of the value of the intellectual processes; and due in the second place to the reduction to impotence of the middle classes through the rise of the lower orders. "The Bourgeoisie losing in the struggle with the proletariat takes refuge in pessimism, in assertion of the futility of existence. This double sin, intellectual and moral, leads to a third and creates that main quality of Italian literature, — that 'ego', that 'egoarchia', that 'egocentricity' which is so much a part of contemporary life."

The quality of nationalism which Livingston names first as noticeable in an Italian literature we have observed at work among the dramatists, sometimes working disastrously. We have noticed how commonly the playwrights have chosen to look backward, to recreate a glorious past, to call up older ideals and bygone achievements, neglecting or ignoring the present with its vital, pulsating struggles and contentions. Even this present-day patriotism has constantly a backward reference; they are burning, bleeding and dying to establish the old

Roman boundaries of Italy, to make the "beautiful Adriatic once more an Italian lake"; they dream gorgeous imperialistic dreams of national dominance. Now these are epic themes, — material for lyric or rhapsody, perhaps, but not for drama. Drama is the art form of a coöperating or struggling democracy, not that of a triumphant or even of a defeated imperialism. It voices the hopes and defeats, possibly the dreams and ideals of actual living society, not the memories of however glorious a past. That the historic genius of Italy has not been dramatic becomes plain when we call for names of dramatic artists to place beside those of Dante, Boiardo, Pulci, Tasso, Ariosto; or beside those of Petrarch, Carducci and Leopardi. As in other days, so now in the modern movement the most distinguished and distinctive pieces of literature are novels and lyrics.

This national-historical egocentricity not only guides the Italian dramatist in his choice of subject-matter; it also colors and inflates the material he has chosen. To a proper understanding of Manzoni's plays, of Cossa's, of Rovetta's *Romanticism*, of Giacosa's *The Red Count*, of Sem Benelli's *Supper of Jokes*, of D'Annunzio's *Francesca da Rimini*, *The Ship* or *Glory* an extensive erudition is necessary, to which one must add much space and much thunder created by the Egoarch himself. And always in the distant background stalks the mighty unlaid ghost of Rome and in the nearer background lurks the mystic shade of the medieval past with Dante as its undying prophet. It is small wonder that this preoccupation produced the violent counterblast of the futurists against the past and all the *Passatisti*. It is only natural that this national consciousness should at times and under certain

conditions become regional or local. Nowhere has local tradition been stronger than in Italy; the dialect theatres have been numerous and flourishing, — Rome, Naples, Milan, Bologna, Venice, Sicily having each its dialect drama; Pirandello, Di Giacomo, Bersezio, Testoni, Gallina, Verga, — each presents and interprets the local life of his own region. In this regional art, there is a sturdiness and a vitality entirely lacking in the drama of cosmopolitan life, even when produced by the same artists. As drama it has the disadvantage of being a closed book to all not acquainted with provincial Italy; indeed, the intimate meanings and subtle beauties of a play in a given dialect escape an auditor from another Italian province.

Another outgrowth of the overemphasis of nationalism is provincialism of attitude, which even a wide international experience is not sufficient to root out of an artist's work. Constantly in Butti and in Bracco, for instance, the reactions of their personages to situations are not so human as Italian. Contrast, for example, the universality of Ibsen in *The Doll's House*, in *Emperor and Galilean*, even in *Peer Gynt* with Praga's peculiarly local problems and solutions, with Giacosa's castigation of faults exclusively or peculiarly Italian, with Bracco's solution or rather his refusal to solve the economic problems embodied in *The Right to Live*. Ibsen thinks in terms of the world, Italians in terms of the Peninsula.

As to the quality of sentimentality (so poorly represented by the English word), this in the soul of the present-day Italian all too often takes the form of gloom, sadness, despair. If he be artistic he has exhausted himself in æstheticism and has no vitality left for action. If he be

practical he feels hopeless in the face of the on-coming and uprising proletariat. The clamorous well-nigh desperate battle cry of the Futurists calling for strife, for gaiety, for action was in a way the register of the predominance of those other qualities in Italian life. Now, of course, there has been a change. The call of the Great War roused young Italy to action of an intensity that should have satisfied the Futurists. But this has not yet registered itself in literature, least of all in drama. The dramatists we have studied were all trained in another school of thought. They have learned to repudiate idealism, but not to accept pragmatic hope. They look about them with eyes of observers scientifically trained, to be sure, but they see misery, oppression, sickness, failure, and with no constructive philosophy to support them, they sink deeper and deeper into the abyss of gloom. Their very amusement is cynical, even bitter, based on a knowledge of human weakness and a scorn of the human foibles without a glimpse of the Rabelaisian or Goldonian gaiety of existence.

Livingston attributes to modern literature in Italy a quality which he calls Catholic idealism, and in so naming it, opens up an interesting vista. Among by far the larger number of Italians, he says, the basis of thinking is the doctrines of the church of Rome, though the believers themselves are not aware of the extent to which they think in Catholic terms; they do not know that there are other terms. There are certain things, certain large classes of things, about which the good churchman may not think at all. So in his mental experiences he is often confronted by a *cul-de-sac*. He may follow his reason just so far, when he comes to a stone wall of dogma which

he may not surmount, but in front of which he must bow to the superior wisdom of Mother Church. "Now one need offend no sensibilities in remarking that the Roman Church which said everything about the whole of life more than a thousand years ago has nothing particularly new to say about specifically 'modern' problems. All the more since the medieval and the modern points of view are slightly different: the one dealing with the adjustment of the individual to environment, the other with the adjustment of environments to individuals. It is sufficient for our purposes to note that Italy with her Catholic traditions is not a hot-bed of new social ideas; the situations treated often with such artistic power have usually an ethical, rarely, if at all a social import."

The fact that the Italians have so lately developed a social consciousness has been pointed out in another connection in this study. They have been the last of the illuminated peoples to adopt, even in partial measure, the great democratic ideas that are working for the alleviation of the masses; they have stuck rather consistently to the sociology of Cain, asking innocently or ironically or brutally as the case might be, "Am I my brother's keeper?" We have come upon no great play on a social question; there is no Italian Ibsen or Shaw or Brieux to present the world's wrongs, adumbrating or proposing a way of setting them right. Feminism, socialism, syndicalism, problems so deeply concerned with the established social order, have not more than troubled the surface of Italian dramatic thought.

Livingston says further: "If we analyze carefully and from the Italian point of view such plays as those of Niccodemi, Di Giacomo, Bracco, the tales of Zuccoli, of

Pastonchi, or Pirandello — of whom you will — we find an extraordinary community of aim and a surprising identity of result. Here usually we have affirmed a high ethical ideal, the attainment of which constitutes the motive life of the situation treated. But the artistic effect, often tremendous in efficacy, is that of pure pity, the feeling of which on the part of author and reader makes up the æsthetic process. Now pity, with all its human affiliations, is one of the tenderest and most beautiful of human emotions, but its social relations are not so clearly important to a distinctly humanitarian age. For passive pity has for its active object charity; which, though it may incidentally do some good to the recipient, has by all philosophies and religions been regarded as specially beneficent to the giver. . . ." "Italy in its vast, its tiny, ancient world is still meeting the problems of life with the pity-charity reaction."

The Italian is content to contemplate the injustices of life, offering as compensation heaven and the joys of another world. Here he is at conflicting variance with the spirit of the modern age of which the foremost conviction and deepest enthusiasm are that conditions can be remedied by legislation and by public opinion, that man is not merely caught on the wheel of things and condemned to suffer, but by his will can adapt his environment to himself.

The Italian's attitude toward society is eminently proof of his detachment from essential problems. Henri Bordeaux says: "The essential difference which separates Italian dramatists from our new French school, that of Bernstein and Brieux, is that in the painting of passion they never attack the basis of society. Their individualism and their sensualism never lead them to talk

nonsense." With all their self-love amounting at times to megalomania they still keep a deep-rooted respect for the institution, such as is unknown in Protestant countries. In fact, the State retains the authority and the majesty of Rome. In his attitude toward the Church, the Italian exhibits a curious paradox pointed out by Bordeaux; he has so vivid a sense of the grandeur and the dignity of the Church that any human being, be he priest, cardinal or pope, becomes a little ridiculous when he presumes to sustain, or especially to incarnate that grandeur and dignity. A play like Testoni's *Cardinale Lambertini* would seem to an Anglo-Saxon to verge on the blasphemous. The good, Rabelaisian old priest in Bracco's *The Triumph*, the village curé of Butti's *Flames in the Dark* with his ambitions for position and worldly power, would shock our sensibilities, — so true is it that in Italy they reserve all veneration for the institution, while in Protestant countries they are more likely to respect the individual.

The treatment of the institution of marriage and the family in the Italian drama is of peculiar significance. Let me quote Livingston again. "The Italian feels deep in his heart that marriage is an immutable, an eternal sacrifice, which most often interferes with all sorts of personal aims. The surrender, through an act of the will, of these personal desires to the eternal principle constitutes for him his noblest tragedy just as the leaping over, the crawling under, the peeping around, the eternal barrier to satisfaction constitutes for him the most joyous comedy." Nine out of every ten plays of recent years are concerned with the failure of marriage. Marriage being the sacrifice of personal desires and ambitions, adultery is condoned, excused, one might almost say encouraged. If

one were to believe the dramatists, he would scarcely expect to find anywhere a pure woman or a man honest in his sex relations. Fortunately, however, the Italians, like the French, are misrepresented in this respect by their dramas, — the great mass of the population of both countries being as a matter of fact observant of the domestic virtues and obligations. In Italy as in France, the drama reader and the theatregoer contract a profound weariness of the eternal inescapable *ménages à trois*, of seduction, of *rendezvous*. One would readily agree that it may be well to avoid the good Anglo-Saxon, historically hypocritical way of covering over with a blanket of silence the things we don't like to see; but one cannot commend the opposite practice of searching out the irregularities for exclusive presentation. Lamb's theory that the picture of corrupt manners presented by the Restoration comedy in England was a fashion, a mere bit of dramatic modishness, not at all a reproduction of the life of the times, may in large measure be applied to present-day drama. It has come to be an expected thing that a play present an unsuccessful marriage; no other love affair now contains the necessary fillip. So that we may well believe that, if one may be permitted a bull, the tiresome round of Eternal Triangles is a fashion, a literary convention, and not a record of a social condition in Italy or any other country.

It is Croce who uses the term *insincerità* of modern literature, making his meaning clear thus: "This fabrication of the void, this void which tries to pass itself off as full of meaning, this non-existent thing which presents itself among real things, and wants to substitute itself for them, and dominate them, — this is insincerity", —

not that insincerity which is lying to other people but which is lying to oneself; by force of lying to himself (man) has aroused such confusion in his soul that he can no longer disentangle it." Reasoned mysticism, modernized Catholicism, mundane asceticism are some of the unreconcilable contradictions that the moderns attempt to pass off as a philosophy and a spiritual programme. Croce is of course aiming his shaft of critical scorn at D'Annunzio. Idealism he says must be restored to life and to art by recognizing again the value of thought. This bourgeois emptiness, this void of insincerity has come out of two things, — the philosophical repudiation of thinking and of logic in the intellectual world, and in the social world the losing struggle of the middle class against the lower orders, its vain opposition to socialism. It has resulted in the æstheticism of D'Annunzio, Pascoli, Fogazzaro and their followers, in the egoism which leads to the doctrine of the Superman in politics, and in art to the appeal to pure emotionalism at the expense of the intellect, to an emphasis upon characteristics of passivity, inaction, æstheticism. They write language that stirs the blood and titillates the senses but in cold analysis fails to yield due meaning and value. The Italian drama is too often moving but not convincing, and the drama, to fulfill the double function immemorially assigned to it — a function at once artistic and social — should both move and convince.

Critics and playgoers in Italy constantly complain that the Italian theatre is not Italian. If we have been obliged to study Italian drama in categories, and characterize it by *clichés* borrowed from the French, the reasons are obvious, for French influence has been potent and all-

pervasive. Spanish, English, German have been influential only in a less degree. Henri Bordeaux asserts that Italian plays are merely transformations of French models, adding nothing dramatic. And Tonelli, Italian though he be, laments bitterly that his countrymen go across the mountains for their inspiration. In the theatre itself the predominance of foreign-made plays is astonishing; at times and in many cities there is not a native drama running. French pieces, of course, are the commonest, but German are abundant — Hauptmann, Sudermann, Bahr, Reinhardt; English plays are frequent — Bernard Shaw, Pinero and Jones; Spanish plays are seen, — Echegaray and the Quintero-Alvarez brothers; all this while many Italian authors have difficulty in gaining an audience. Quite recently, though, things seem to have taken a turn, and even the commercial managers, acceding to the demand of a stimulated public opinion, are giving more frequent and more careful productions of Italian plays.

From the material point of view, according to the dramatic critic Eduardo Boutet and in consonance with what has been said elsewhere in these studies, the theatre, and the drama itself, suffer in Italy from bad management, poor buildings and the inadequate training of actors and authors; and especially, as the same interests suffer in all countries, from the necessity of making a financial success of a production at any sacrifice of artistic excellence. The theatres are many of them old and stuffy. Though there has been a great revival of playhouse-building in the last few years there has been as yet no great modern enterprise like the Leipsic, Berlin or Münich theatres. The Italian houses are given to great size and

ornateness combined with insufficient room behind the stage and poor lighting. A great renovation of the theatres would be an immense benefit to drama.

Finally, Boutet claims, the worst handicap from a material point of view is the poor taste of the actors and those authors who cater to them. The actor-manager in Italy has an eye for business, and to succeed fully must follow the vogue. Sometimes, Boutet says, things get played so poor that one wonders how the *capo-comici* could ever have been taken in by them; they may be successful, but still poor; the stars need their taste trained to pick good plays. But the authors, too, need training sometimes. Too often plays appear that display all the lamentable characteristics of hasty and careless creation; the author, making a mere trade of supplying plays, rushes in to follow the vogue set up by some successful piece, and ignorant of dramatic technic, with no background of learning or cultivated experience, with no knowledge of acting and having had no apprenticeship in writing, he produces things that offer a fat part for the star and for the rest are made up of "dumb show and noise equally inexplicable." By such process is any new idea in drama exploited, corrupted, detached from the stream of art and encysted as a mere commercialized *genre*.

Perhaps if the life of the world had gone on in its orderly, or rather its familiar fashion, a student who had followed as we have now done the history of a literary type for fifty years of its progress, or who had only read the scores of specimens we have been concerned with, might, even though he claimed no vatic powers, have ventured upon a prediction. But the social, financial, intellectual, emotional, scientific upheaval of the war makes prophecy un-

wise in all but its simplest aspects. The future of the drama in Italy is upon the knees of the gods. Is it likely that in Italy and in the rest of the world this era of action, of colossal achievements, of sensation, of adventure will create a new epic period, — that the art of literature will be prevailingly employed in the recounting of deeds and the celebrating of heroes? Will the confederated storm of sorrow that has assailed the world, the grief and rage and fear that have swept men's bosoms, the wild uplift of joy and hope and victory record itself in dirge and hymn and pæan, — a new universal outburst of lyricism? Will the coming reconstruction of society, the readjustments and coöperations of the new social order find their natural channels in a deeper, nobler drama than any the world has yet seen? To whatever form the literary art of the world may prevailingly take, we may believe that Italy, now a citizen of the new world of nations, will make her characteristic and beautiful contribution.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

THIS list of plays is intended rather for ready reference than to be a complete bibliography; it contains only the most important plays presented during the modern period. Reference is made to bibliographies and works containing supplementary matter.

The dates on the left are those of the first performance. On the right are the date and place of *first* publication in book form, unless when otherwise indicated.

ALTAVILLA, PIETRO.

No cammarino, de na primma donna tragica, co Pascariello Carola ridicolo declamatore etc. Naples, 1867.

Teatro Comico Napolitano. 1849 ff.

AMBRA, LUCIO D'.

Steeple Chase.

Il plenipotenzario.

Piccole scene della grande commedia.

La via di Damasco.

Effetti di luce.

Il Bernini (With G. Lipparini). 1904.

Goffredo Mamelli (With G. Lipparini). 1904.

La frontiera. *Nuova Antologia*, 1915.

ANNUNZIO, GABRIELE D'.

La parabola delle vergini fatue e delle vergini prudenti. 1897.

La parabola del'uomo ricco e del povero Lazaro. 1898.

La parabola del figliuol prodigo. 1898.

I Sogni delle Stagioni:

Sogno d'un mattino di primavera. 1897. Translation in *Poet Lore*, 1902.

Sogno d'un tramonto d'autunno. 1898. Translation in *Poet Lore*, 1904.

La città morta. 1898. Translated as *The Dead City* by Arthur Symons. London, 1900; New York, 1902.

La Gioconda. 1898. Translated as *Gioconda* by Arthur Symons. New York, 1902.

La gloria. 1899.

Francesca da Rimini. 1902. Translated by Arthur Symons. New York, 1902.

La figlia di Jorio. 1904. Translated as *The Daughter of Jorio* by C. Porter, P. Isola and A. Henry. Boston, 1907 and 1911.

La fiaccola sotto il moggio. 1905.

Più che l'amore. 1907.

La nave. 1908.

Fedra. 1909.

Le martyre de Saint Sébastien. 1911. Translated into Italian in 1911.

La Pisanella. 1913. Translated into Italian, 1914.

Parisina, Tragedia lirica. 1913.

La Chevrefeuille. 1913. Adapted in Italian as *Il ferro* in 1913. Translated into English by C. Sartoris and G. Enthoven as *The Honeysuckle*. 1915.

Cabiria. 1914.

Amaranta. 1914.

La Piave. 1918.

ANTONA-TRAVERSI, CAMILLO.

La festa del villaggio. 1877.

Il matrimonio di Alberto. 1886.

Il sacrifizio di Giorgio. 1887.
Punto e da capo. 1888.
Uno scandalo. 1887.
La figlia di Nora. 1889.
Finte e parate. 1889.
Una modella. 1890.
1890. Tordi o fringuelli. 1894.
1892. La balia.
1893. Le Rozeno. 1893.
1893. Danza macabre. 1894.
1894. I fanciulli. 1894.
1895. Terra o fuoco. 1896.
Frine: Operetta. 1897.
1899. Parissiti. 1899, and Palermo, 1913.
L'Acquitté. 1904. Translated into Italian as L'Assolto. 1908.
Babbo Gournas. 1906.
In bordata. 1908.
Calvario. 1908.
La nuova famiglia. 1908.
La torre di pietra. 1913.
1914. Il bavaglio. 1915.
La Française. 1916.
La fiancée. 1916.
Don Matteo. 1917.
Stabat Mater. 1917.

Camillo Antona-Traversi has also been active in collaborating and in this field has produced:

With Jean Sartène (in French).
La piovra. Translated into Italian by A. Salsilli. 1911.
Dopo 44 Anni. 1915. Translated into Italian. 1916.
With P. di Martiny.
Madre. 1912.

Donnine allegre. 1913.
With A. Ribaux.
In pace. 1912.
With E. H. Vivier.
L'École des neveux. 1913.
With Ch. Raymond.
La preghiera della bimba. 1913.
With C. Margelle.
Petite Reine. 1913.
With R. M. Perazzi.
Gli ultimi giorni di Goffredo Mamelli. 1917.

ANTONA-TRAVERSI, GIANNINO.

1890. La mattina dopo. 1910.
1892. Per vanità. 1910.
1893. Dura Lex. 1910.
1893. La civetta. 1904.
1894. La prima volta. 1910.
1896. Il braccialetto. 1897 and 1910.
1897. Il razzo. 1898.
1898. La scuola del marito. 1899.
1899. La scalata all'Olimpo.
1900. L'amica. 1902.
1902. L'unica scusa.
1903. I giorni più lieti. 1904.
1904. La fedeltà dei mariti.
1905. Viaggio di nozze. 1917.
1907. Carità mondana. 1907.
1907. Una moglie onesta. 1907.
1908. I martiri del lavoro. 1909.
La madre. 1911.
La Du Barry. 1912, with E. Golisciani.
Il paravento. 1914.
La grande ombra. 1915.
Il sopravissuto. 1916.

These one-act plays written early but not published until 1917.

Anima semplice; Hony soit qui mal y pense; Pesce d'aprile; L'ultima spese; La pelliccia di martora.

BAFFICO, GIUSEPPE.

1897. Prodigio.
1898. I disertori. 1904.
1898. Ala ferita.
1899. Il germe.
1900. Le colpe degli altri.
1902. Sulla soglia.
1911. Amor nemico.
1912. L'idolo.

BENELLI, SEM.

1904. La tignola. 1911.
1905. La maschera di Bruto. 1908.
1909. La cena delle beffe. 1909.
1910. L'amore dei tre re. 1910.
1911. Il mantellaccio. 1911.
1912. Rosmunda. 1912.
1913. La Gorgona. 1913.
1915. Le nozze dei centauri. 1915.

BERSEZIO, VITTORIO.

1852. Pietro Micca.
1853. Romolo.
Nobiltà.
Il perdono. 1877.
1861. La violenza l'a sempre torto.
1863. Le miserie del signor Travetti. 1876.
1864. Una bolla di sapone. 1876.
1869. Le prosperità del signor Travetti. 1876.
La fratellanza artigiana. 1876.
I violenti. 1876.
Da galeotto a marinaio. 1876.

1869. Un pugno incognito. 1876.
Fra due contendenti. 1876.
Uno zio milionario. 1876.
I mettimale. 1876.
Casa minuta.
Diavolina.
Le donne forte.
Il marito positivo.
Il signor ministro (With A. Dumas and J. Claretie). 1883.

BERTOLAZZI, CARLO.
Al monte di pietà.
1887. In verger. 1887.
1891. La religione d'Amelia. 1891.
El nost'Milan, including La Povera gent'. 1894; I sciori. 1895.
1895. Strozzin. 1905.
1895. La ruina.
1900. L'Amigo di tutti.
1903. La casa del sonno.
1903. L'Egoista. 1903.
1904. Lulù. 1904.
1905. Il matrimonio della Lena.
1906. Lorenzo e il suo avvocato.
1908. I giorni di festa.
1909. Ombre del cuore.
1916. I fratelli Bandiera.

BOÏTO, ARRIGO.
1900. Nerone. 1901.

BONASPETTI, GINO.
Un malifico, tragedia lirica. 1896.
Il redivivo. 1912.
I figli di Caïno. 1912.

BORG, WASHINGTON.
Semina.

Tramonto.
Rose rosse.
Sensitive. 1905.
Il catechismo di Susette.
Il passato che torna.
Tre giardini.
Nuda.
Volo di rondine.
La presidentessa. Dramatized from the novel of Roberto Bracco. 1914.

BOVIO, GIOVANNI.

1877. Cristo alla festa di Purim. 1887.
San Paolo. 1895.
Il millenio. 1904.
Leviatano. 1904.
Socrate.

BRACCO, ROBERTO.

Teatro completo di Roberto Bracco *Palermo* 1909 ff.

1886. Non fare ad altri.
1887. Lui, lei, lui.
1887. Un'avventura di viaggio.
1888. Le disilluse.
1893. Dopo il veglione e viceversa.
1893. Una donna. 1894.
1894. Infedele. Translated and played as *The Countess Coquet*. New York, 1907.
1894. Maschere.
1895. Il trionfo.
1895. Don Pietro Caruso. Translated and played in English. 1912.
1896. La fine dell'amore. Adapted from the Italian and played as *I Love You*. London, 1913.
1898. Fiori d'arancio. Played in English as *Orange Blossoms*. New York, 1914.
1899. Tragedie dell'anima.

1900. Il diritto di vivere.
1900. Uno degli onesti. Played as *The Honorable Lover*. New York, 1915.
1901. Sperduti nel buio.
1903. Maternità.
1904. Il frutto acerbo.
1904. Fotografia senza . . .
1905. La piccola fonte. Translated as *The Hidden Spring*. *Poet Lore*, 1907.
1905. Notte di neve. Played as *Night of Snow*. New York, 1915.
1906. I fantasmi. Translated as *Phantasms*. *Poet Lore*, 1908.
1908. Nellina.
1909. Il piccolo Santo. 1910.
1910. Il perfetto Amore. 1913.
1912. Nemmeno un bacio. 1913.
1913. L amante lontano. 1916.
Ad armi corte.
La chiacchierina.
1915. L'internazionale. 1918.
1916. L'amante lontano. 1918.
1916. L'uocchie cunzacrate. 1918.
1918. La Culla. 1918.

BUTTI, ENRICO ANNIBALE.

1893. Il frutto amaro.
1894. L'Utopia. 1894.
1894. Il vortice.
1895. La Furia domata, Commedia musicale. 1895
1898. La fine d'un ideale. 1900.
1900. La corsa al piacere. 1901.
1900. Lucifero. 1901.
1901. Una tempesta. 1903.
1903. Il gigante e i pigmei. 1903.
1904. Fiamme nell'ombra. 1907.

Tutto per nulla. 1906.
Il cuculo. 1907.
Il castello del sogno. 1910.
Nel paese della fortuna.
Le rivali. 1911.
1911. Sempre così. 1911.
Intermezzo poetico. 1913.
1913. Le seduzioni. (Written with A. Gugliemo.) 1916.
Il sole invisibile. 1913.

CAPUANA, LUIGI.
Il piccolo archivio. 1886.
1888. Giacinta. 1890.
Malìa.
Spera di sole. 1898.
Gastigo.
Delitto ideale. 1903.
Il mulo di rosa. 1905.
Un vampiro. 1907.
Quacquara.
A volume of "Teatro dialettale siciliano", 1911, includes Malìa; Lu cavaleri Pidigna; Ppi he currivu; Bona gentie; Cumparaticu; 'Ntirrugatoriu; Riricchia.

CASTELNUOVO, LEO DI. (Pen name of Count Leopoldo Pullé.)
1857. Il magnetizzature.
1858. Giuseppe Balsemo.
1867. Il guanto della regina.
1868. Un cuor morto.
1876. Fuochi di paglia.
1892. O bere o affogare.
1899. El maestro.
La cugina.
Il Conte Ugolino.

1793.
Pesce d'aprile.
Conte verde. These last five plays reprinted. Milan, 1907.

CASTELVECCHIO, R. (Pen name of Count Giulio Pullé.)
Iginia d'Asti.
Frine.
Romilda.
Sangue per sangue.
Maria Faliero.
I due zuavi.
La nostalgia.
Ugo Foscolo.
La donna pallida.
La cameriera astuta.
La donna romantica ed il medico omeopatico.
Commedia in famiglia.
La cameriera prudente.
Famiglia ai nostri giorni.
Il favorito della regina.

CAVALLOTTI, FELICE.
I Pezzenti. 1877.
Guido. 1873.
Agnese. 1891.
1874. Alcibiade.
I Messeni. 1877.
Il Cantico dei Cantici. 1882.
La sposa di Menecle. 1882.
Nicarete, ovvero la festa degli Aloi. 1886.
Le rose bianche.
La lettera d'amore.
Agatodemon. 1895.
Luna di miele. 1883.
Cura radicale. 1883.
La figlia di Jefte. 1887.

Sic vos non vobis. 1884.
Lea.
Povero Piero. 1884.

COGNETTI, GOFFREDO.
Prime arme. 1877.
Mala vita. 1889. (With S. di Giacomo.)
Basso porto.
A Santa Lucia. 1895.
Alta camorra. 1898.

CORRADINI, ENRICO.
Dopo la morte. 1896.
Giacomo Vettori. 1901.
Giulio Cesare. 1902.
Le sette lampade d'oro. 1904.
L'apologo delle due sorelle. 1904.
Maria Salvestri. 1907.
Carlotta Corday. 1908.
Le vie del oceano. 1913.

COSSA, PIETRO.
Mario e i Cimbri. 1865.
Sordello. 1876.
Monaldeschi. 1874.
1867. Beethoven. 1872.
1868. Puschkin. 1876.
1871. Nerone. 1872. Produced as *Nero* in New York, 1908.
1871. Plauto ed il suo secolo. 1876.
1875. Lodovico Ariosto e gli Estensi. 1878.
1875. Messalina. 1877.
Cleopatra. 1879.
1876. Giuliano l'Apostato. 1894.
1877. Cola di Rienzo. 1894.
1878. I Borgia. 1881.
1879. Cecilia. 1885.
1880. I Napoletani del 1799. 1891.

DELEDDA, GRAZIA.

Odio vince. 1904.
Amori moderni. 1908.
L'Edera. 1912. (With C. Antona-Traversi.)

FARINA, SALVATORE.

1899. Tutto per il mondo.
Amore cieco. 1907.
Dal dire al fare. 1907.
Coscienza elastica. 1907.

FERRARI, PAOLO.

Baltromeo calzolaro. 1847. (Became later in Italian *Il codicillo dello zio Venanzio,* 1865.)
Scetticismo. 1850. (Became later the comedy in verse *La donna e lo scettico,* 1864.)
La bottega del capellaio.
Goldoni e le sue sedici commedie nuove. 1852.
Una poltrona storica. 1853.
Dante a Verona. 1853.
La scuola degli innamorati. 1854.
Dolcezza e rigore. 1854.
La satira e Parini. 1854–1856.
Prosa. 1858.
La medesina d'onna ragazza amaleda. 1858. A comedy in Modenese dialect reworked the next year in Italian.
Amore senza stima. 1868.
Il Duello. 1868.
Cause ed effetti. 1871.
Il ridicolo. 1872.
Il suicido. 1875.
Due dame. 1877.
Alberto Pregalli. 1880.
Vecchie storie. 1865.
Nessuno va al campo. 1866.
Amici e rivali. 1874.

Un giovine ufficiale. 1880.
Il Signor Lorenzo. 1886.
La separazione. 1886.
Fulvio Testi. 1888.

FERRAVILLA, EDUARDO.
El Duell del sur Panera.
La class di asen.
On spos per rid.
Scena a soggetto musicale.
Minestron.

FOGAZZARO, ANTONIO.
El garofano rosso. 1903.
Il ritratto mascherato. 1903.
Nadejde. 1903.

FOSCOLO, UGO.
1796. Tieste. 1797.
1811. Aiace. 1828.
1813. Ricciarda. 1820.

GALLINA, GIACINTO.
Il primo passo. 1877.
Così va il mondo, bimba mia. 1882.
Tutto in campagna. 1883. Translated into Italian. 1884.
I Oci del cuor. 1883. Translated into Italian. 1885.
1877. Teleie vecchi.
Dopo la commedia. 1883.
Amor di Paruca. 1883.
1875. El moroso de la nona.
Gnente de novo. 1883.
1892. La famiglia del Santolo.
La mamma non muore. 1885.
1872. Baruffe in famiglia. 1886.
1894. La base di tuto. 1886.
Esmeralda. 1890.

1891. Serenissima. 1896.

GHERARDI DEL TESTA, TOMMASO.

Una folle ambizione.
Vanità e capriccio.
Un marito sospetoso.
Con gli uomini non si scherza.
Il sistema di Giorgio.
Il regno di Adelaide.
Il sistema di Lucrezia.
La moda e la famiglia.
Il vero blasone.
Le coscienze elastiche.
La vita nuova.
La carità golosa.

GIACOMETTI, PAOLO.

Il poeta e la ballerina.
Torquato Tasso.
Bianca Maria Visconti.
Camilla Foa da Casala.
Lucrezia Maria Davidson.
Elisabetta, Regina d'Inghilterra. Translated as *Elizabeth, Queen of England* by T. Wilkins. New York, 1866.
Figlia e madre.
La donna.
La colpa vendica la colpa.
La morte civile.
Corilla Olimpica.
L'ultimo dei duchi di Mantova.
Cristofero Colombo. (Trilogia.)
Luisa Strozzi.
Fieschi e fregosi.
Cola di Rienzi.
Il Domenichino.
Per mia madre cieca.

La donna in seconde nozze.
Quattro donne in una casa.
Giuditta. Translated as *Judith* by J. A. Gray. New York, 1866.
Luigia Sanfelice.
Maria Antonietta, Regina di Francia. Translated as *Marie Antoinette, Queen of France* by J. C. Pray, New York, 1867, and H. Forest, London.
Michelangiolo Buonarotti.
Carlo II, Re d'Inghilterra.
La moglie del'esule.
Pellegro Piola.
Sofocle.

DI GIACOMO, SALVATORE.
'O voto. 1909.
A San Francesco. 1909.
'O mese Mariano. 1909.
Assunta Spina. 1909.
Quand l'amour meurt. 1909.

GIACOSA, GIUSEPPE.
1871. Una partita a scacchi. 1871. Translated as *The Wager* by B. H. Clark. New York, 1913.
1871. Storia vecchia.
1871. Non dir quattro se non l'hai nel sacco. 1891.
1871. Al can' che lecca cenere non dar farina.
1872. Il trionfo d'Amore. 1875.
1877. Al pianoforte.
1877. Il marito amante della moglie. 1877.
1878. Il fratello d'armi. 1878.
1880. Il Conte rosso. 1880.
1880. Luisa. 1881.
Sorprese notturne. 1881.
1882. Il filo: scena filosofico-morale per marionette. 1883.

1885. Resa a discrezione. 1888.
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